

JOCASTA

THE ORIGINAL READING SCRIPT

for

A FILM

or

A THREE PART TELEVISION SERIES

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EPIGRAPH

During the twenty years that Jocasta and Oedipus shared the double throne of Thebes, there were no wars, no insurrections, no invaders, no colonial expeditions. The land of the warlike Thebans became a state of peace. There was great prosperity. The wealth of Thebes became legend throughout the ancient world. It was second only to Athens in cultural achievements -- and it was called paradise. However, there has never been a history written of its Queen -- at that time -- Jocasta, my mother.

Ismene, the Scribe.

Having found no written history of Queen Jocasta. I have reconstructed it from remembrances, family tales, and her notes.

Ismene the Virgin Scribe,
descendent of
Jocasta the Queen.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

(ca. 800 B.C.)

THIS IS NOT AN HISTORIC FILM. IT IS A MYTH, A DREAM, ANCIENT AND MODERN. IT BEARS A QUALITY OF STARK REALITY AS WELL AS A DREAM STRANGENESS. THE SETTINGS AND COSTUMES SUGGEST ANTIQUITY, BUT MUST NOT BE BOUND BY IT. ANACHRONISMS ARE FREELY EMPLOYED. "JOCASTA" TAKES PLACE IN THE THEBES OF ANCIENT GREECE, BUT COULD JUST AS WELL TAKE PLACE IN THE THEBES OF ANCIENT EGYPT, IN SOPHOCLES' TIME, IN FREUD'S TIME -- OR IN OUR OWN.

THE PALACE OF THEBES FACES JUST SOUTH OF WEST WITH THE MAIN CONCENTRATION OF THE CITY BEFORE IT. IT IS BUILT OF ROUGHHEWN STONE: HUGE, CRUDE, BARBARIC. IT GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF AN ENORMOUS STONE CAGE, BUT IS NEITHER SQUARE NOR SYMMETRICAL. IT APPEARS TO HAVE WEATHERED CENTURIES -- PARTS OF IT ARE RUINED AND HAVE NEVER BEEN RESTORED. A CONTINUOUS BALCONY ENCIRCLES IT AT THE LEVEL OF THE SECOND FLOOR. ALL THE WALLS, FLOORS, STAIRWAYS ARE OF STONE. THE CENTRAL HALL, THE FULL HEIGHT OF THE BUILDING, AND THE HALL TO THE THRONE ROOM ARE WIDE, ALL OTHERS ARE NARROW AND DARK. EXCEPT IN A FEW ROOMS, THE ATMOSPHERE, EVEN AT MIDDAY, IS SHADOWED, DARK, COLD. ALL THE ROOMS OF THE PALACE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF OEDIPUS' ROOMS (FORMERLY CREON'S) ARE FURNISHED WITH EXTREME SIMPLICITY.

JOCASTA'S APARTMENT IN THE PALACE IS COMPOSED OF THREE ROOMS. THE FIRST IS A VERY LARGE FORMAL AUDIENCE CHAMBER; THE SECOND, A PRIVATE SITTING/RECEPTION ROOM; AND THE THIRD IS HER BEDROOM. BESIDE HER BED IS A CRADLE. IT IS DRAPED IN BLACK AND SERVES AS A SHRINE.

THE EMERALD CROWN IS WROUGHT OF GOLD SERPENTS WHICH WRITHE UP AND OUT FROM A CIRCLE. EMERALDS ARE SUSPENDED BY LINKS FROM THEIR MOUTHS. WITH THE MOVEMENT OF THE HEAD, THE EMERALDS MOVE, CATCHING AND REFLECTING THE LIGHT.

CAST

JOCASTA, 35, Queen of Thebes

HAEMON, 26, Jocasta's Nephew, Creon's son

APHRON, 45, Jocasta's Maid

KUPIA, 13, Aphron's Daughter

CREON, 44, Jocasta's Brother

TEIRESIAS, ancient, a Seer

BOY, 12, Teiresias' Guide

OEDIPUS, 19, the hero

ACMON, 42, an Officer of the Palace Guards

CAPTAIN TYRUS, 50, Chief Officer of the Queen's Guard

POLYPHONTES, 39, a soldier in the Queen's Guard

LORD DYMAS, 48, friend of the Queen

BRANCHUS, 67, friend of Creon

STABLE MANAGER, 54

PAGE, 9

SHEPHERD, 60

CAPTAIN ASTERIUS, 51, prison guard

THE QUEEN'S GUARDS uniformed in gold

THE PALACE GUARDS uniformed in red

CREON'S GUARDS uniformed in dark blue

SOLDIERS uniformed in red and in blue

PEOPLE OF THEBES

NOBLES OF THEBES

SERVANTS

PRIESTS

THE SPHINX

A CAT

HORSES: Jocasta's **ABRAXAS**, Haemon's **NONIOS**, Acmon's **PYROIA**

JOCASTA

PART I

NIGHT: A FEW SMALL TORCHES LIGHT THE LARGE, IRREGULAR MAIN SQUARE OF THEBES. WHITEWASHED HOUSES CROWD AROUND THE SQUARE. NARROW STREETS RUN BETWEEN THEM. THE WIDE MAIN ROAD LEADS FROM THE SQUARE TO THE WEST GATE. IN THE SHADOWS NEAR THE HOUSES GROUPS OF PEOPLE, MOSTLY WOMEN, STAND SILENTLY.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SQUARE IS A LARGE FUNERAL PYRE, ITS FUEL COMPOSED OF DRESSED WOOD: CEILING BEAMS, DOOR POSTS, FURNITURE, ETC.. CORPSES LIE ON THE PYRE. BESIDE IT STANDS A PRIEST. AT HIS FEET, ON A CRUDE LITTER, LIES ANOTHER CORPSE. AS THE PRIEST LIFTS BACK THE CLOTH, WE SEE THE DEAD MAN'S EMACIATED FACE. HE DIED OF STARVATION. THE PRIEST SPRINKLES WATER OVER THE BODY INTONING THE PRAYER FOR THE DEAD. TWO MEN GENTLY LIFT THE BODY AND PLACE IT ON THE PYRE. ANOTHER MAN STEPS FORWARD TO IGNITE THE PYRE. HEARING A DISTURBANCE, HE TURNS. THE BODY OF A CHILD IS BROUGHT IN ON A LITTER. THE MOTHER, CARRYING A JUG OF MILK, FOLLOWS, MOURNING. THE BODY IS LOWERED. THE MOTHER KNEELS. THE PRIEST KNEELS BESIDE HER AND LIFTS BACK THE CLOTH. THE CHILD IS A BOY ABOUT SIX YEARS OLD. THE MOTHER, TOUCHING HER DEAD CHILD, BEGINS, SILENTLY, TO CRY.

MOTHER: He wouldn't drink the milk. Give it to someone.

THE PRIEST TAKES THE JUG OF MILK, HOLDS IT UP. FROM THE SIDE OF THE SQUARE, A WOMAN STEPS FORWARD. SHE KISSES BOTH THE PRIEST'S AND MOTHER'S HANDS, THEN HURRIES AWAY. THE PRIEST BEGINS AGAIN THE PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD. WE MOVE AMONG THE PEOPLE, STUDYING THEIR FACES. TEIRESIAS, STANDS NEAR THE PYRE LEANING ON A STAFF. HIS OTHER HAND RESTS ON THE SHOULDER OF A BOY. THE CHILD'S BODY IS PLACED ON THE PYRE LIT BY A TORCH, THE PYRE FLAMES UP QUICKLY. TEIRESIAS TAKES A STEP BACKWARD FROM THE HEAT. THE MOTHER SOBS.

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THE TINY FLAMES OF ANOTHER FIRE GLOW BENEATH TWO BOWLS OF MILK WARMING OVER A BRAZIER. A HAND DIPS A DECORATED STICK INTO A JAR. THE HAND, APHRON'S, LIFTS THE STICK LOADED WITH HONEY AND PUTS IT IN ONE OF THE BOWLS OF MILK.

JOCASTA'S VOICE: Give it to me, Aphron. I'll stir the honey in myself.

APHRON HANDS JOCASTA THE BOWL JOCASTA, READING A PAPYRUS SCROLL, RECLINES ON A CUSHIONED BENCH NEAR THE OPEN DOORS THAT LEAD TO THE BALCONY. A CAT SITS AT HER FEET. HAEMON STANDS AT THE DOORS LOOKING OUT. BEYOND HIM CAN BE SEEN THE LIGHT FROM THE FUNERAL PYRE. HAEMON TURNS AS APHRON HANDS HIM THE OTHER BOWL.

APHRON: It's Hymetus honey.

HAEMON: AMUSED

Thank you Aphrodite.

HE LIFTS HIS BOWL TOASTING BOTH JOCASTA AND APHRON.

The nectar of the Gods.

APHRON, TAKING THE SERVING TRAY, EXITS.

JOCASTA: You don't have to drink it. It helps me sleep.

AS SHE LICKS THE HONEY FROM THE STICK, AN INSECT BUZZES AROUND HER FACE. SHE BRUSHES IT AWAY.

Close the doors, Haemon.

HAEMON: You'll be too warm.

JOCASTA: The world smells of death.

SHE PUTS ASIDE THE SCROLL SHE HAS BEEN READING.

The Phoenicians were, perhaps, more given to war than even your father -- and on the high seas. Were the Egyptians as intent on killing, killing, killing? Was their Sphinx a cannibal like ours?

You'd think there would be better things to write about than killing. Cadmus, I believe, brought us the alphabet to write poetry.

HAEMON: Someone will solve the riddle.

JOCASTA: They tear down houses to burn the dead.

HAEMON GIVES HER A QUESTIONING LOOK.

Yes. I went out last night

HAEMON: It's not safe.

JOCASTA: Is there nothing more for Thebans than starvation? -- carrion birds? -- emptiness?

HAEMON: You used to give me honey and milk when I was young, when I had a fever.

JOCASTA SETS HER BOWL ON A TABLE, BESIDE SEVERAL

SCROLLS, STEPS ONTO THE BALCONY AND STANDS FOR A LONG TIME STARING INTO THE NIGHT. THEN, WITH FORCED GAIETY, AS SHE REENTERS:

JOCASTA: You'd think this was the only land that ever had a Sphinx. They've been known before --

SHE INDICATES THE SCROLLS

and worshipped. We'll ride out tomorrow, take her some honey.

HAEMON: Please, Jocasta.

JOCASTA: There are six other gates to Thebes. Let her sit!

HAEMON: Someone will answer the riddle.

JOCASTA: And Creon will invent a new monster. We must get rid of the need to fear monsters. Is that the answer?

SOUNDING OVER AND AFTER HER LAST WORDS WE HEAR TRUMPETS FROM AN INNER COURTYARD). **JOCASTA IS STARTLED.**

HAEMON: Father is drilling the soldiers.

JOCASTA: Why?

HAEMON: He's planning something for tomorrow.

JOCASTA: Is he going to send an army against the creature? Each brave soldier can bring back a feather. Perhaps she'll have a riddle for each: "Oh good soldier, you who would triumph for Creon..."

SHE INTERRUPTS HERSELF, HER TONE CHANGES. SOFTLY:

Tomorrow?...is the anniversary of my son's death.

HAEMON: He doesn't remember that.

JOCASTA: He must. I ordered mourning for the court.

HAEMON: It has been forbidden.

JOCASTA CRIES OUT; HAEMON TRIES GENTLY TO CALM HER.

JOCASTA: I can't even have that, Haemon. Your father is cruel, my brother is cruel.

SHE MOVES TO THE BALCONY DOORS AGAIN, THERE IS NOW ONLY A FAINT GLOW FROM THE PYRE.

Twenty years, twenty years of death. Where is the moon?

HAEMON: COMING TO STAND BEHIND HER.

It rises very late, near morning. You'll see it tomorrow with the sun.

JOCASTA: What is he planning?

HAEMON: I don't know.

JOCASTA MOVES TOWARD THE BEDROOM. HAEMON FOLLOWS HER.

JOCASTA: There is nothing else to think of in this place, but the Sphinx and death -- and Creon. Each day I hear Kupia singing. Aphron brings me fruit. And the world grows colder and colder. He loved me once, Haemon, my brother loved me once. If the Sphinx were my minion, I'd have her peck out his heart.

HAEMON: You must sleep.

JOCASTA: SITTING AT HER DRESSING TABLE.

Yes, I'll sleep.

HAEMON: Someone will solve the riddle.

JOCASTA: He will be Creon's slave.

HAEMON: A king will not be Creon's slave.

THEIR IMAGES ARE REFLECTED IN THE DRESSING TABLE MIRROR. **HAEMON** KISSES **JOCASTA** ON THE FOREHEAD, THEN LEAVES. **JOCASTA** SITS ALONE LOOKING DOWN INTO A ROUND HAND MIRROR. TEARS FALL FROM HER OPEN, STARING EYES ONTO THE MIRROR; THEY GATHER AND OBSCURE HER IMAGE.

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SUDDENLY, SUCH BRIGHTNESS -- AS IF SUNLIGHT WERE FLASHING ON A MIRROR. WE ARE LOOKING DOWN AT A LANDSCAPE OF SAND GLARING IN THE NOONDAY HEAT. THE TITLES APPEAR, "JOCASTA" ETC., IN BLACK, ELONGATED LETTERS, AS WE MOVE SLOWLY TOWARD THE SAND. AS THE TITLES END, WE ARE CLOSE ENOUGH TO SEE OBJECTS HALF BURIED IN THE SAND, SUGGESTING THIS LAND WAS RECENTLY LIVED ON AND IS NOW ABANDONED.

A PANORAMIC VIEW ACROSS THE DESERT. IT IS MIDDAY. THE SUN BLAZES. THERE ARE NO SHADOWS, THERE IS NO VEGETATION, NO WATER, NO MOVEMENT, ONLY DUST AND DESOLATION. (*IN THE 21ST CENTURY, WE CAN SAY IT LOOKS LIKE APOLLO XVII FOOTAGE FROM THE MOON.*) FROM HIGH UP CAN BE SEEN ROCKS, ABANDONED FIELDS, THE REMAINS OF AN IRRIGATION SYSTEM, WHIRLING DUST. FAR IN THE BACKGROUND ARE HIGH, ROCKY CLIFFS. THERE IS NO SOUND. AT A BREAK IN THE CLIFFS. WE DISCERN TWO TINY FIGURES. ONE STANDS IN THE ROAD LOOKING UP AT THE SECOND, WHO STANDS ON A JUTTING ROCK NEAR THE TOP OF THE CLIFFS. WE DO NOT STOP TO EXAMINE THESE FIGURES. ON THE ROAD, RIDING TOWARD THE CLIFFS, ARE FOUR HORSEMEN. ONE RIDES SLIGHTLY IN ADVANCE OF THE OTHERS.

THERE IS A SINGLE SOUND. IT MIGHT BE THE SOUND OF A HUMAN VOICE. IT IS FOLLOWED BY A VIOLENT SCREAM -- SOUNDING LIKE AN EXPLOSION. IT ECHOES AND RE-ECHOES IN THE SILENT DESOLATION. IN THE SKY WE SEE A FIGURE IMPLODE, LIKE A GUT-SHOT BIRD, TWISTING AND FALLING. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL WHAT IT IS, BUT, FOR A BIRD, IT IS HUGE. ITS GROTESQUE MASS HITS THE EARTH: BROKEN BONES, BROKEN WINGS, BLOOD. A FEW FEATHERS DRIFT DOWN. NEAR THIS DESTROYED BODY WE SEE A YOUNG MAN'S FEET, COVERED WITH SAND, WEARING SANDALS. ONE FOOT IS SLIGHTLY

TWISTED.

WHEN THE FOUR HORSEMEN HEAR THE SCREAM, THEY STOP AND REMAIN STILL, LISTENING. A HURRIED CONSULTATION FOLLOWS. ONE HORSEMAN DISMOUNTS AND STARTS, ON FOOT, BACK TOWARD THEBES. THE OTHER THREE, TAKING THE FOURTH HORSE, CONTINUE TOWARD THE CLIFFS. THEY BREAK INTO A TROT.

WE STAY WITH THE MAN, RUNNING TOWARD THE CITY. BUT, EVEN MOVING SLOWLY, WE SOON LEAVE HIM BEHIND. THE ROAD RUNS PAST A SPARSE WOODS OF WITHERED TREES. WITHIN IT STANDS KUPIA, A YOUNG GIRL WITH BOW AND ARROW, DRESSED FOR HUNTING. HAVING HEARD THE SCREAM, SHE IS LOOKING TOWARD THE CLIFFS.

WE COME TO THE IRON GATES OF THE CITY. INSIDE THE GATES, GUARDS, IN THE BLUE UNIFORMS OF CREON'S SOLDIERS, ARE SETTLING DOWN TO SIT OR LIE AGAINST THE PILLARS. IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME SINCE THEY OPENED THE GATES TO LET THE FOUR HORSEMEN OUT. THEY HAVE NOT HEARD THE SCREAM. WE CONTINUE ALONG THE MAIN ROAD THROUGH THEBES. THE SIDE STREETS, BETWEEN THE WHITE-WASHED-GLARING-IN-THE-SUN HOUSES SEEM, AT FIRST, DESERTED. IN THE SQUARE OF THE FUNERAL PYRE, WOMEN SWEEP AWAY THE ASHES. MEN CARRY IN WOOD FOR A NEW PYRE. A FEW PEOPLE, ALL DRESSED IN BLACK, SIT IN A DOORWAY, CROUCH AGAINST A WALL, ARE HALF HIDDEN BEHIND A WINDOW. AN ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR AND APATHY PREVAILS.

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BRIEFLY WE VISIT AN INTERIOR WHERE PEOPLE, TALKING IN HUSHED VOICES, UTTER SUCH PHRASES AS:

My mother died yesterday. / We're all dead. / Down with the House of Laius. / The Queen is mad. / The Sphinx obeys the mad Queen.

HAEMON STANDS NEAR A WINDOW, LISTENING. HE IS NOT DRESSED IN BLACK, NOR DOES HE SHARE THE GENERAL MOOD OF RESTLESSNESS AND ANGER. HE MOVES ON, PASSING SOME HALF-CLOSED SHUTTERS, WE AGAIN HEAR HUSHED VOICES, CATCH OVERLAPPING PHRASES:

She will marry the hero. / The proclamation says nothing about marriage. / The Queen offered her hand./ The proclamation offers gold. / Depose the Queen.

ALL TURN TO LOOK AT THE SPEAKER OF THE LAST PHRASE; SEVERAL NOD IN SILENT AGREEMENT.

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AGAIN OUTSIDE, WE GET OUR FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE PALACE. IT SITS LIKE A STONE CAGE ON A SLIGHT RISE ABOVE THE CITY. EMERGING FROM BETWEEN BUILDINGS, WE ENCOUNTER THE FIRST OF THE PALACE GATES. THEY ARE OPEN. GUARDS STAND ON EITHER SIDE. TORN-DOWN BUILDINGS INDICATE THESE GATES HAVE BEEN RECENTLY CONSTRUCTED. THE SECOND SET OF GATES, FLANKED BY GUARDS, ALSO STANDS OPEN. THE THIRD SET OF GATES, BEYOND WHICH THE STONE PALACE, DARK, CRUDE, AUSTERE, IS FULLY VISIBLE, IS BARRED AND HEAVILY GUARDED. ALL GATE GUARDS ARE UNIFORMED IN CREON'S DARK BLUE. THEY ARE HOT, WEARY, APATHETIC; SOME LEAN ON THEIR SWORDS. A FEW TOWNSPEOPLE STAND OUTSIDE THE GATES, THEY MIGHT BE STATUES OF THE SAME STONE AS THE PALACE, DARK, STILL, IN ATTITUDES OF ENDLESS WAITING.

INSIDE THE PALACE COURTYARD GUARDS AND SOLDIERS STAND, STROLL, WAIT. A VAST FLIGHT OF STEPS LEADS UP TO THE PALACE ITSELF. THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO, TO ITS RIGHT, THOUGH STILL OF HEWN STONE, IS A LIGHTER, MORE GRACEFUL BUILDING. A GUARD LOOKS UP TO TELL THE TIME BY THE SUN. THOUGH YOUNG, HIS FACE IS DISILLUSIONED. HE LOWERS HIS EYES AND GLANCES TOWARD THE PALACE AS THE GREAT DOORS SWING SLOWLY OPEN -- AS IF OF THEIR OWN VOLITION.

AFTER THE SUNSHINE GLARE OF THE COURTYARD, THE INTERIOR OF THE PALACE SEEMS OMINOUSLY DARK. THE CHANT OF A FUNERAL MARCH BEGINS SOFTLY AND INCREASES IN VOLUME THROUGHOUT JOCASTA'S LAMENT.

THE TWO SOLDIERS, WHO OPENED THE DOORS, WEAR THE GOLDEN UNIFORM OF JOCASTA'S GUARDS. MORE GUARDS LINE THE VAST SHADOWY CORRIDOR. THEY HAVE BEEN LOUNGING AND, HAVING JUST COME TO ATTENTION, THEIR BEARING DOES NOT SUCCEED IN BEING MILITARY. THEY HAVE THE UNCERTAIN LOOK OF NOT KNOWING IF THEY SHOULD BE DOING WHAT THEY ARE DOING. ONE SUPPRESSES A GIGGLE AS HE SEES THE ADVANCING FIGURE OF JOCASTA.

THE QUEEN CARRIES A ROUND MIRROR. SHE WALKS SLOWLY, CEREMONIOUSLY AS IF IN A FUNERAL PROCESSION. APHRON FOLLOWS, WANTING TO STOP JOCASTA, BUT IS AFRAID TO TOUCH HER. AS JOCASTA WALKS ONTO THE GREAT PORCH. WE SEE HER THROUGH THE PILLARS AND INNER GATES, FROM BEHIND THE TOWNSPEOPLE. THEY DO NOT MOVE, BUT CONTINUE TO STARE. THEY HAVE SEEN THE "MAD" QUEEN BEFORE. ONE ASKS OF ANOTHER:

What's she holding?

THE MIRROR FLASHES IN THE SUN. THE MUSIC STOPS. JOCASTA STANDS STILL. WHEN SHE SPEAKS, IT IS IN A QUASI-LITURGICAL TONE, THE VOICE OF A PRIESTESS ADDRESSING A LARGE CROWD.

JOCASTA: People of Thebes, people of Thebes gather together. The sun is at the zenith, your Queen is in mourning. She wears the black of the dead, she wears the black of those who mourn. Gather together, hear my sorrow. I do not mourn the dead King, dead at the crossroads, dead of corruption. I mourn for you. I mourn for your life, I mourn for my life. I mourn for all who yet live in this land of the dead.

AT THE GATES THE SCANDALIZED TOWNSPEOPLE SHOUT CONTEMPTUOUS REMARKS. THE GUARDS IN THE COURTYARD PAY NO ATTENTION TO THE TOWNSPEOPLE AND VERY LITTLE TO JOCASTA. IN THE PALACE ENTRANCE, HER GUARDS HAVE GATHERED TO WATCH HER -- FOR AMUSEMENT. LOST IN HER OWN SORROW, HER OWN "MADNESS," JOCASTA DOES NOT HEAR WHAT IS SAID. SHE SLOWLY ADVANCES DOWN AND ALONG THE STEPS, TOWARD THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO. FROM TIME TO TIME, APHRON, FOLLOWING BEHIND JOCASTA, TRIES TO INTERRUPT, BEGGING JOCASTA TO COME BACK INTO THE PALACE.

Our heads bowed in sorrow, our bodies bent in pain, we live with a curse upon the land. The Gods speak to certain men, and those men have brought us to destruction. I do not mourn the dead King. I mourn for you and for myself. I weep for the first murder. The dead King killed the new born King, and I weep. I weep and I remember: twenty years ago today my son was killed -- my innocent son, the Queen's son, your Prince. He was killed. The Gods ordered it, said the King, and the King obeyed. On the altar of Apollo I shall offer this sacrifice...

WITH A SWIFT MOVEMENT, JOCASTA LIFTS THE MIRROR HIGH
OVER HER HEAD. IT CATCHES THE SUN.

TOWNSPEOPLE: SHOUT, SHOCKED AND ANGRY.

Blasphemy! / Madness! /The Queen is mad. /Thebes is cursed.

JOCASTA: ...a mirror in which Apollo may see himself, may see the likeness of the one whom he ordered for slaughter, may see and weep. My son, had he lived, would rival Apollo's beauty, incarnate the God, usurp the worship of stone, make of God a man. I will make the villainous idol look upon the one he has killed and cry for shame.

THROUGH HER VEIL, WE SEE TEARS ON JOCASTA'S FACE.

FAR AWAY AND INDISTINCT, WE HEAR VOICES -- A CROWD IS GATHERING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CITY. SHOUTS ARE HEARD ABOVE THE GENERAL NOISE:

The riddle is solved. / The Sphinx is dead. / The Sphinx is dead.

WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THESE WORDS UNTIL THE PEOPLE AT THE PALACE GATES PICK THEM UP AND REPEAT THEM.

JOCASTA: Weep, Apollo, weep. Your tears will unGod you, and crack this mirror wherein your image is. Let my people cry, "Apollo is dead!" My innocent son was sacrificed. You, People of Thebes, are sacrificed daily to appease the Gods. But, I, the Queen, decree that no more blood shall flow in the name of any God. Apollo is dead.

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THE MAN FROM THE DESERT, STILL RUNNING, PUSHES HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWD AT THE PALACE GATES. HE SHOUTS TO THE GUARDS. THEY OPEN THE GATES, LET HIM IN, AND QUICKLY RE-CLOSE THE GATES. THERE IS MUCH SHOUTING. AFTER A MOMENT, UNDERSTANDING THE NEWS THE HORSEMAN HAS BROUGHT, THE CROWD BEGINS TO CHANT:

The riddle is solved. / The Sphinx is dead. / The Sphinx is dead.

THESE SHOUTS CONTINUE AND ARE RANDOMLY ECHOED BY SOLDIERS AS THE MAN CROSSES THE COURTYARD AND ENTERS THE PALACE.

JOCASTA, HEARS THE WORDS. STARTLED, SHE DROPS THE MIRROR. IT SHATTERS. SHE STARES AT THE FRAGMENTS., THEN LIFTS HER EYES TO LOOK OUT ACROSS THE CITY. WE HEAR MORE AND MORE SHOUTING. **PEOPLE** ARE COMING OUT OF THEIR HOUSES. MANY **PEOPLE** TURN AND RUN DOWN THE STREET -- AWAY FROM THE PALACE TOWARD THE CITY GATES -- EAGER TO SEE THE RIDDLE SOLVER. **SOLDIERS** POUR FROM THE LOWER REGIONS OF THE PALACE INTO THE COURTYARD. THE GUARDS, WHO STOOD AT THE GREAT OPEN DOORS, RUN DOWN THE STEPS, PAST **JOCASTA**.

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IN THE MIDDLE OF TOWN, **PEOPLE**, RUNNING IN FROM SIDE STREETS, DO NOT KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO. IN THE CONFUSION AND EXCITEMENT, WE HEAR CRIES AND QUESTIONS.

Who solved the riddle? / The Sphinx is dead. / Who killed her?

*

YOUNG OEDIPUS, TRAVEL-BESMIRCHED, WEARY, RIDES WITH **LORD ACMON**, THROUGH THE OPEN CITY GATES. THE JOSTLING **CROWD** SHOUTS AT THEM, AND AT EACH OTHER. **ACMON** IS KNOWN BY SOME OF THE **TOWNSPEOPLE**. WE HEAR HIS NAME SHOUTED. MANY THINK IT IS HE WHO HAS SOLVED THE RIDDLE.

OEDIPUS LOOKS ON THE SCENE, ASTONISHED, WARY, ALERT TO THE DANGERS OF A FRENZIED **CROWD**. **ACMON** WATCHES SILENTLY, BUT WITH PLEASURE. **THE GATE GUARDS** CLEAR SPACE AROUND **ACMON** AND **OEDIPUS**. **ACMON** DISMOUNTS. **THE GUARDS** SALUTE. **ACMON** RETURNS THE SALUTE. THE NOISE OF THE **CROWD** IS SUCH THAT WE CANNOT HEAR WHAT THEY SAY. IN A MOMENT, **ACMON** TURNS AND RAISES HIS HAND TOWARD **OEDIPUS**. AT THIS GESTURE, THE **CROWD** SURGES AROUND **OEDIPUS**. WE HEAR SHOUTS FROM **THE PEOPLE** CALLING HIM:

Savior! / Hero! / Riddle solver! / Sphinx slayer. / King

THE GATE GUARDS, STAND BACK, SILENT, NOT PLEASED. ACMON SHOUTS AN ORDER AND THE CROWD IS HELD BACK FROM OEDIPUS. IN DISMOUNTING, OEDIPUS LOSES HIS BALANCE. ACMON CATCHES HIM, STEADIES HIM. OEDIPUS SMILES AND SHRUGS TO APOLOGIZE FOR HIS CLUMSINESS. HE LIMPS VERY SLIGHTLY WHEN HE WALKS.

ACMON: SHOUTING TO THE CROWD

This man has solved the Sphinx's riddle. The Sphinx is dead. Long live the hero! Thebes is free!

ACMON EMBRACES OEDIPUS. THE CROWD CHEERS. SOME KNEEL TO OEDIPUS. DURING THIS, KUPIA SLIPS IN AT THE GATES. SHE TOUCHES OEDIPUS -- AS DO MANY OTHERS -- AND SMILES AT ACMON. HE BECKONS TO HER, AND WHISPERS:

ACMON: Find some laurel leaves. They say there aren't any. But find some.

KUPIA LAUGHS AND NODS.

There might be a tree in my mother's garden.

AS SHE CAREFULLY MAKES HER WAY THROUGH THE CROWD, KUPIA, STILL LAUGHING AT THE DELIGHT OF HER ERRAND, WAVES. THEN, BREAKING FREE, SHE RUNS TOWARD THE PALACE.

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THE PALACE PRECINCT IS FULL OF CHAOTIC MOVEMENT. SOLDIERS, WEARING CREON'S BLUE UNIFORMS, COME FROM THE PALACE, TALKING, SHOUTING, EMBRACING. THE ONLY STILL FIGURE IS JOCASTA, WHO NOW TURNS AND DASHES UP THE STEPS. COMMANDS ARE GIVEN TO THE SOLDIERS. THEY ASSEMBLE AND MARCH OUT THROUGH THE GATES. MANY TOWNSPEOPLE GO WITH THEM.

JOCASTA REACHES THE TOP OF THE STAIRWAY. CREON, AN IMPOSING FIGURE, UNIFORMED LIKE HIS SOLDIERS, STANDS IN THE CENTER OF THE OPEN DOORWAY. JOCASTA TRIES TO DODGE PAST HIM. HE CATCHES HER. SHE

STRUGGLES, TWISTS FREE, AND RUNS INTO THE PALACE. APHRON FOLLOWS HER.

CREON: Calm her!

APHRON: Yes, my lord.

AS APHRON HURRIES AFTER JOCASTA, CREON TURNS TO WATCH THE ACTIVITY IN THE COURTYARD. THE VAST STONE PILLARS AND IRON GATES ARE JUST BEGINNING TO CAST SHADOWS. CREON ENTERS THE PALACE. THE GREAT DOORS ARE CLOSED BEHIND HIM.

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AT THE CITY GATES, THE CROWD AROUND OEDIPUS IS NOW LARGER. SOME, ON THEIR KNEES, WORSHIP HIM. OEDIPUS IS EMBARRASSED, PUZZLED. HE TRIES TO LIFT AN OLD MAN FROM HIS KNEES. THE OLD MAN CLINGS TO HIM IN ABJECT ADORATION. A GATE GUARD STRIKES THE OLD MAN, SHOVES HIM BACK INTO THE CROWD. OEDIPUS IS SHOCKED, BUT ACMON RESTRAINS HIM FROM INTERFERING.

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JOCASTA, ENTERS HER APARTMENT, RUNS THROUGH THE AUDIENCE CHAMBER AND INTO THE RECEPTION ROOM WHERE SHE COLLAPSES, OUT OF BREATH, SOBBING. IN A MOMENT, APHRON ENTERS, CLOSES THE DOOR. SHE KNEELS BEFORE JOCASTA, PUTS HER ARMS AROUND HER, MURMURS GENTLY:

APHRON: Jocasta, my lady. My child. Hush, my child.

JOCASTA: WITH AN ANGRY CRY, PUSHES APHRON AWAY.

It must be stopped! Call Captain Tyrus! Who gave orders for the Guards to march? Call Captain Tyrus!

APHRON REMAINS STILL, HER HEAD BOWED.

Will you obey me! Call the Captain!

APHRON: My child, it will do no good. Soon you will be mistress in this house again!

JOCASTA: Be silent! Be silent! Be silent!

APHRON GOES TO ONE OF THE GREAT CARVED CHESTS AND TAKES OUT A HEAVY, ELABORATELY EMBROIDERED, JEWELLED GARMENT.

APHRON: Let me dress you.

JOCASTA: For a riddle solver!

APHRON: For your King.

JOCASTA: No! I will not have it. Call my Captain! I want the streets emptied.

APHRON: Madame.

JOCASTA: Call Captain Tyrus!

APHRON STILL DOES NOT MOVE. JOCASTA THREATENS TO STRIKE HER.

Call him!

AS APHRON TURNS, THE DOOR IS OPENED. CREON ENTERS. THERE IS A MOMENT OF STILLNESS. THEN APHRON, NOT LOOKING AT CREON, HURRIES OUT. CREON STEPS INTO THE ROOM, SHUTS THE DOOR, AND SMILES AT JOCASTA. SHE RETURNS HIS LOOK WITH SOBER DEFIANCE.

CREON: I expected to find you dressing.

JOCASTA: You expect a lot of things, Creon.

CREON: Difficulties with the Queen are a commonplace.

HE WALKS TO THE BALCONY DOORS AND OPENS THEM. WE HEAR THE SHOUTING IN THE DISTANCE.

Listen. -- Shall I send soldiers to dress you?

JOCASTA: Am I needed? Will I add to your festive occasion?

CREON: You've made yourself indispensable.

JOCASTA STARES AT HIM. HER COURAGE BEGINNING TO FAIL, SHE TURNS ABRUPTLY AND GOES INTO HER BEDROOM. CREON CLOSES THE BALCONY DOORS AND FOLLOWS HER.

Will Captain Tyrus protect you? From whom? From yourself? I didn't offer you as a prize for riddle solving.

JOCASTA: Who is the riddle solver?

CREON: WITH AMUSED INNOCENCE

I have not seen him. You didn't qualify your offer as to shape and manner. Is that what you want to do now? Shall we call the Council?

JOCASTA: Don't make me marry. You can prevent it.

CREON: A Queen lives by her decrees.

JOCASTA: Please, Creon, whomever you've chosen, don't make me marry.

CREON: I try to imagine what you were thinking of. The good men of the Council were as astonished as I. Did you think the Gods would send you -- what? -- Adonis -- for a lover?

JOCASTA: I thought it might help to save Thebes.

CREON STEPS TO THE CRADLE-SHRINE

CREON: Is this to save Thebes, as well!

IN ONE MOTION, CREON RIPS THE BEDCLOTHES AND DRAPERIES FROM THE CRADLE. JOCASTA LUNGES AT CREON, GRABBING THE CLOTH FROM HIS HANDS. HE STEPS ADROITLY ASIDE, THROWS HIMSELF ON HER BED, LAUGHING.

ON THE BED ARE SOME OF THE PAPYRUS SCROLLS JOCASTA WAS READING IN THE NIGHT. AS CREON FALLS ON THEM THE PAPYRUS TEARS. FRANTICALLY, JOCASTA PULLS THE SCROLLS FROM BENEATH CREON. DISTRAUGHT BY THIS "ACCIDENT," AS MUCH AS BY THE DESECRATION OF THE CRADLE SHE TRIES TO RESCUE THE SCROLLS, RE-DRAPE THE SHRINE, REMAKE THE BED. CREON WATCHES WITH AMUSED CONTEMPT FOR HER CONCERNS.

Save it! Save it! Save all of it. Your new husband might give you some use for it.

JOCASTA SINKS TO THE FLOOR, HOLDING A SCROLL, CRYING, HER HEAD AGAINST THE CRADLE.

You can read some lullabies to the child.

HE PULLS THE BLACK VEIL FROM HER HEAD.

Control yourself. Gods, you're grotesque! Keeping a shrine for a twenty-year-dead son! Ranting at the Gods! -- I try to pretend it's for Laius.

JOCASTA: Why don't you kill me, too. It would be so easy.

CREON: I don't know how to deal with your imaginings, Jocasta.

JOCASTA: Don't make me marry. Creon, I beg you. I've been used and used -- a pawn in your games -- I don't want to be sold again!

CREON: Your offer has been stricken from the Council records.

JOCASTA TURNS TO LOOK AT HIM, TAKEN ABACK.

Weeks ago, the day you made it. -- Come, get up, Jocasta.

AS CREON HELPS HER TO HER FEET, HE TAKES THE SCROLLS FROM HER HANDS AND TOSSES THEM ON THE FLOOR:

And throw these blasphemous things away. Would you were a man, I would teach you to fight. You'd enjoy a few battles, I think. Come, we are not interested in someone unsuitable sharing the throne. But receive him. Receive the hero. Treat him with honor. Give us a chance to applaud your generosity.

JOCASTA: You don't know what you're destroying. I am not mad, Creon. How many things you have destroyed out of ignorance. I do know the truth.

CREON: The official reward is gold.

JOCASTA: But I will behave as you please today. If you protect me this once, be assured, I will accede to your wishes.

CREON: Would that I were not your brother -- and solved the riddle.

JOCASTA: Yes.

CREON: You would marry me.

JOCASTA: Yes, Creon.

CREON: I, too, could rant against the Gods.

JOCASTA: WITHDRAWING FROM HIM.

But you sold me to Laius. If you found it expedient, you'd sell me again. You don't love anyone, least...

CREON: You'll not be forced to marry. Trust me.

JOCASTA: Trust you?

CREON: I would like to see you well and happy again. The official reward is gold, a hundred weight in gold. Thebes can ill afford it, Jocasta.

JOCASTA: If I could trust even a little...

CREON: Whatever I do is for you -- and for Thebes.

JOCASTA: The Sphinx... Was that real, Creon?

KNOCKING IS HEARD AT THE DOOR OF THE OUTER ROOM. **CREON** LIFTS JOCASTA'S HAND AND KISSES IT. THE KNOCKING IS HEARD AGAIN. **CREON** MOVES TO THE OUTER ROOM.

*

CREON: Enter!

CAPTAIN TYRUS, IN THE GOLD UNIFORM OF JOCASTA'S GUARDS OPENS THE DOOR. SEEING **CREON**, HE HESITATES, THEN SPEAKS CAUTIOUSLY.

TYRUS: The Queen sent for me.

CREON: And will be pleased to see you. Have you seen the hero?

TYRUS: No, my Lord.

CREON: Do you know his identity?

TYRUS: No, my Lord.

JOCASTA, ENTERS AND STANDS FOR A MOMENT IN THE BACKGROUND.

JOCASTA: Have you prepared the reception?

TYRUS: We are awaiting orders.

CREON: The Palace Guards...

JOCASTA: *I will give the orders!*

CREON: MAKES A MOCK BOW AND STEPS ASIDE.

As you wish.

TYRUS: My Queen.

JOCASTA: The Palace Guards are to assemble in the courtyard, below my balcony.

CREON: They have their orders.

JOCASTA: They will stand in the courtyard!

JOCASTA MOVES ABOUT THE RECEPTION ROOM. CAPTAIN TYRUS FOLLOWS HER.

My own guards will stand on the balcony, along those walls. I shall receive the riddle solver here. Only members of the Council will be admitted. And you, Captain Tyrus, bring the hero in yourself.

TYRUS: Yes, your Majesty.

JOCASTA: Open the gates. Let the people into the courtyard.

TYRUS: It shall be done.

JOCASTA: You are to bring him in.

TYRUS: Yes, your Majesty.

JOCASTA: Have Lord Haemon sent here. And... Have the guards armed. Have my guards fully armed.

TYRUS LOOKS QUESTIONINGLY AT HER, ABOUT TO SPEAK.

That is my wish. You may go.

JOCASTA WALKS AWAY.

Send soldiers to drape the balcony. We will use only the flag of Thebes.

TYRUS: Yes, your Majesty.

AS HE EXITS, CREON STOPS HIM.

CREON: Wait for me here.

CREON SHUTS THE DOOR BETWEEN HIMSELF AND TYRUS.

TO JOCASTA:

The throne room would be more suitable.

JOCASTA: No.

CREON: Your chambers are rather intimate.

JOCASTA: Intimate? My life is in here. I will receive him here.

CREON: I would advise you to change your mind.

JOCASTA: I will receive him here.

AS CREON GOES OUT, SHE SAYS:

Send in Aphron. I must dress.

IN THE CORRIDOR, CREON NODS FOR CAPTAIN TYRUS TO FOLLOW HIM.

APHRON GOES IN TO JOCASTA.

*

THE SOLDIERS AND GUARDS FROM THE PALACE HAVE ARRIVED AT THE CITY GATES. A PROCESSION IS FORMED AND STARTS TOWARD THE PALACE. OEDIPUS WALKS WITH ACMON. THEY ARE SURROUNDED BY CREON'S GUARDS WHO MARCH IN A SQUARE FORMATION, SIX TO A SIDE. MANY SOLDIERS PRECEDE AND FOLLOW THEM.

THE NOISY, SHOUTING CROWD TRIES TO PRESS THROUGH THE GUARDS TO TOUCH OEDIPUS, TO TALK TO HIM, TO WARN HIM. CREON'S GUARDS,

BRUTALLY REPEL THEM. ONE WOMAN, BREAKING THROUGH THE GUARDS, LEERS AND SAYS:

The mad Queen will like you.

SHE IS DRAGGED AWAY. SOME OF THE CROWD CRAWL ON THEIR KNEES. OEDIPUS IS SHOCKED AND REPELLED TO SEE BOTH HOW ABJECT AND HOW VIOLENT THESE PEOPLE ARE. SOME CARRY CLUBS OR STICKS, IMPLEMENTS THAT COULD BE USED AS WEAPONS.

THE PROCESSION PASSES THROUGH THE SQUARE OF THE PUBLIC PYRE. THE MEN AND WOMEN, WHO HAVE BEEN CLEANING THE SQUARE AND BUILDING A NEW PYRE, LEAVE THEIR WORK TO JOIN THE PROCESSION. OEDIPUS GLANCES AROUND THE SQUARE PUZZLED, INTERESTED. HE LOOKS TO ACMON QUESTIONINGLY, BUT ACMON IS NOT LOOKING AT HIM.

OEDIPUS: TO ACMON. HE HAS TO SHOUT:

Who governs this Thebes?

A VOICE IN THE CROWD SCREAMS:

A Sphinx!

ACMON: You will meet her soon.

OEDIPUS: Why do they kneel to me?

ACMON: You have brought deliverance.

*

CREON AND CAPTAIN TYRUS WALK DOWN THE CORRIDOR TO THE THRONE ROOM. TYRUS IS NERVOUS. CREON STROLLS, PASSING THE TIME OF DAY.

CREON: It's a wonderful day for a celebration, you can feel the intoxication in the air. Lucky man, whoever he is. Did you ever attempt to answer the riddle?

TYRUS: I applied, but...

CREON: Of course. Well, we have a hero. Thebes was in need of a hero.

TYRUS: Your Highness, I must hurry.

CREON: Yes?... You are expected in the throne room. Lord Branchus will give you instructions.

TYRUS: The Queen...

CREON: I will send soldiers to escort the Queen.

FURTHER DOWN THE HALL, **POLYPHONTES** HAS COME OUT OF A SIDE PASSAGE AND IS HURRYING AHEAD, CARRYING A HUGE PILE OF MATERIAL.

Polyphontes!

POLYPHONTES STOPS, TURNS, WALKS BACK TO **CREON**.

What have you there? The Captain will help you with those.

CREON EXAMINES EACH AS HE LIFTS THE GREAT FLAGS AND BUNTINGS FROM **POLYPHONTES'** ARMS AND GIVES THEM, ONE BY ONE, TO **CAPTAIN TYRUS**.

Thebes. The Imperial bunting -- it's very worn. Mine.

HE SMILES AT **CAPTAIN TYRUS**.

The throne room. You may go. Take them. Drape them, they are still colorful -- we'll soon need to replace them.

CREON CONTINUES TO EXAMINE THE REST OF THE FLAGS **POLYPHONTES** HOLDS. **CAPTAIN TYRUS** WALKS ON DOWN THE HALL. DURING THE FOLLOWING, A SOLDIER APPROACHES **CAPTAIN TYRUS**, TAKES THE FLAGS FROM HIM, THEN BOTH

GO UP THE STEPS TO THE THRONE ROOM.

So, the Sphinx is dead. Long live the hero.

POLYPHONTES: Yes, my Lord.

CREON: Thebes rejoices.

POLYPHONTES: Yes, indeed, my Lord.

CREON: Will the Queen marry the riddle solver?

POLYPHONTES: The people talk of nothing else.

CREON: What do you, you soldiers, think of such a marriage?

UNCOMFORTABLE, **POLYPHONTES** HESITATES. THEY PASS THE STAIRWAY TO THE THRONE ROOM. **POLYPHONTES** STOPS, BUT **CREON** WALKS ON AND **POLYPHONTES** MUST FOLLOW HIM.

POLYPHONTES: We will abide by... the Queen's wishes.

CREON: If he were a stranger... from another land, that would be unfortunate, wouldn't it? Or, again, he might be one of our own people, familiar with our customs and our laws. A friend of the Queen, possibly, or of myself.

POLYPHONTES: Very likely, my Lord.

CREON: Very likely?

POLYPHONTES: I mean, we would wish for such a person to be King.

CREON: If the hero were such a man, perhaps a demonstration....

THEY HAVE REACHED THE GREAT FRONT DOORS. AS **CREON** OPENS ONE OF THEM, HE SEES **TEIRESIAS** COMING UP THE STEPS, LED BY THE BOY.

...a spontaneous demonstration by the Queen's own soldiers.

POLYPHONTES: I understand, my lord.

CREON: Acmon was going to attempt an answer today.

POLYPHONTES: Yes, my Lord.

CREON DISMISSES POLYPHONTES, WHO HURRIES BACK INSIDE. DURING THE FOLLOWING, POLYPHONTES AND OTHER SOLDIERS ARE SEEN DRAPING THE BALCONY OUTSIDE THE THRONE ROOM.

*

CREON MOVES TO THE EDGE OF THE PORCH TO STAND BETWEEN THE PILLARS TO WATCH THE PROCESSION, FAR IN THE DISTANCE. THEN HE STRIDES CHEERFULLY DOWN THE STEPS.

CREON: Teiresias! Welcome!

CREON WAVES THE BOY AWAY AND TAKES TEIRESIAS BY THE ARM, HELPING HIM UP A STEP OR TWO. THE BOY LEANS AGAINST THE NEAREST PILLAR SULLENLY WATCHING CREON.

If you come to announce our good fortune, you are late.

TEIRESIAS: I come, not as a messenger of happiness, but in fear.

CREON: Fear? Today? Why, blind Teiresias, if you had eyes you would see the world rejoicing. Listen.

TEIRESIAS: I have come to see the Queen.

CREON: The Sphinx is conquered, the Queen rejoices.

TEIRESIAS: The Sphinx dies, but her death makes fertile the ground for new devastation.

CREON: Is that a new riddle?

TEIRESIAS: We have feared evil, now we must fear lust.

CREON: HIGHLY AMUSED

Lust? Surely that's a bit...

TEIRESIAS: Where is Jocasta? I must warn her.

BOY: JUMPING FORWARD.

Watch out!

TEIRESIAS HAS STEPPED CLOSE TO THE FRAGMENTS OF THE BROKEN MIRROR. CREON ANGRILY WAVES THE BOY ASIDE AND LEADS TEIRESIAS A FEW STEPS FROM THE GLASS.

TEIRESIAS: What is it?

CREON: There is broken glass on the steps.

TEIRESIAS: What manner of glass?

CREON: A mirror.

TEIRESIAS: Who shall meet death without a soul?

CREON: Is that your warning?

TEIRESIAS: Whose image lies shattered?

CREON: IMPATIENTLY.

Mine, if I look in the fragments.

TEIRESIAS' HEAD JERKS UP. IF HE COULD SEE HE WOULD BE

STARING SEARCHINGLY AT CREON. CREON DOES NOT NOTICE. HE IS STANDING ABOVE TEIRESIAS, AND STUDYING THE CITY. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, HIS ATTENTION RETURNS TO TEIRESIAS.

What do you want to tell Jocasta?

TEIRESIAS: A man comes into the land preceded by Omens that foretell danger for Thebes, tragedy for the Queen, sorrow for the House of Laius.

CREON: What man?

HAEMON APPEARS AT THE PALACE GATES. THEY ARE OPENED. THE GUARDS SALUTE HAEMON AS HE ENTERS. THEY RE-CLOSE THE GATES. HAEMON STARTS UP THE STEPS.

TEIRESIAS: Time reverses in its course, we must escape the present.

CREON SALUTES HAEMON, AND HAEMON RETURNS THE SALUTE.

CREON: Wonderful day, Haemon!

HAEMON: Indeed it is, Father. Teiresias, we are fortunate.

CREON: Have you been to the west gate?

HAEMON: No.

CREON: Acmon is a courageous man.

HAEMON: Acmon?

HAEMON STUDIES CREON FOR A MOMENT.

Yes.

HAEMON, BOWING HIS HEAD SLIGHTLY, CONTINUES UP THE STEPS. HE NOTICES THE BALCONY BEING DRAPED. WHEN HE REACHES THE TOP, HE STOPS, TURNS TO

WATCH CREON AND TEIRESIAS. HAEMON CANNOT HEAR THE WORDS OF THE FOLLOWING, BUT HE SEES CREON'S ANGER.

CREON: Is Acmon the hero?

TEIRESIAS: Apollo has selected the hero.

CREON: Of course. Speak in plain words. Is it the hero Jocasta must fear?

TEIRESIAS: Today brings doom to the Queen. Thebes must...

CREON: INTERRUPTING.

Ah, you *can* speak plainly. Wise Teiresias, you once told me I would inherit the crown of Thebes.

TEIRESIAS: The present weds with the past, inheritance debars the future.

CREON: Do these omens confirm your prediction?

TEIRESIAS: The days to come lie in darkness.

CREON: Look up, Teiresias, you can't see the sun. But feel its warmth, its brightness.

TEIRESIAS: The Queen is in danger, I must warn her.

CREON: She doesn't believe in omens!

TEIRESIAS: The Queen is a wise woman, she does not doubt the Gods.

CREON: She curses the Gods. "They've killed my son," she cries eternally. She'll never listen to you.

TEIRESIAS: As her counselor, and counselor of her father...

CREON: She calls you a blind fool.

TRUMPETS FROM THE PROCESSION SOUND. **HAEMON** GOES INTO THE PALACE.

Let me give her your warning, Teiresias. She will listen to me.

HE MOTIONS TO THE BOY.

TEIRESIAS: Time runs out, Prince Creon.

CREON: It is time to celebrate.

CREON WHISPERS TO THE BOY, THEN OFFERS HIM COINS. THE BOY REFUSES AT FIRST, THEN TAKES THEM. CREON ACCOMPANIES TEIRESIAS AND THE BOY DOWN A FEW STEPS. HE MOTIONS FOR A GUARD TO SEE THEM OUT THROUGH A SIDE GATE. THEN CREON HURRIES UP THE STEPS AND INTO THE PALACE.

*

KUPIA ENTERS THE AUDIENCE ROOM OF JOCASTA'S APARTMENT. SHE PAUSES, GOES TO THE CLOSED DOOR OF THE RECEPTION ROOM, HESITATES, LISTENS.

*

IN JOCASTA'S BEDROOM, **APHRON** IS HELPING JOCASTA DRESS.

APHRON: Lovely, lovely.

JOCASTA: I need a veil.

KUPIA'S KNOCK IS HEARD. JOCASTA, ALERT, PAUSES FOR A MOMENT, THEN MOTIONS FOR APHRON TO ANSWER THE DOOR.

*

SEEING **KUPIA'S** HUNTING CLOTHES, **APHRON** STEPS INTO THE RECEPTION ROOM AND REPROVES HER ANGRILY.

APHRON: Where have you been?

KUPIA: Walking in the woods by the west gate.

APHRON: Kupia, that's...

KUPIA: Motherrrr!

**KUPIA IS FORTHRIGHT, INTELLIGENT, FULL OF GAIETY, IMPATIENT WITH
PALACE INTRIGUE -- AND YOUNG ENOUGH, SHE KNOWS, TO GET AWAY WITH IT.**

*

JOCASTA: COMING TO THE DOORWAY, PUTTING ON PERFUME.

What were you doing out there?

KUPIA: Hunting.

APHRON: It's against the law to go outside the gates.

KUPIA: TO JOCASTA, SMILING.

I like to hunt. That's not against the law, is it?

APHRON: It ought to be.

JOCASTA: How do you get out?

KUPIA: Oh, I have secret ways. Not even Creon knows.

JOCASTA: AMUSED

Should the Queen chastise you?

KUPIA: PRETTILY

If you don't, I'll give you one of my magic arrows.

SHE OFFERS JOCASTA AN ARROW.

JOCASTA: MUCH AMUSED, ACCEPTS THE ARROW.

Thank you. What is their magic?

KUPIA: Why -- to please a Queen!

JOCASTA LAUGHS, THEN TURNS AWAY TO PLACE THE ARROW ON A TABLE.

JOCASTA: What did you see at the west gate?

KUPIA: I saw the hero.

JOCASTA MOVES TOWARD HER BEDROOM, KUPIA FOLLOWS HER.

I slipped in at the gates with him. He passed so close I could have touched him -- with an arrow.

TO APHRON SHE WHISPERS:

I did touch him -- for luck.

JOCASTA: What is he like? -- this hero.

APHRON HOLDS KUPIA BACK, SHE WHISPERS:

APHRON: Be careful what you say. The Queen...

KUPIA: The Queen! -- Mother? I wish I were the Queen!

SHE PULLS AWAY FROM APHRON AND DARTS INTO JOCASTA'S BEDROOM.

*

JOCASTA IS SEATED AT HER DRESSING TABLE. THOUGH KUPIA OFTEN PAUSES

DURING THE FOLLOWING, JOCASTA DOES NOT ANSWER NOR LOOK AT HER. WE SEE JOCASTA'S FACE REFLECTED IN HER DRESSING TABLE MIRROR.

KUPIA: He's young, my Queen. -- He's not from Thebes. -- He may be frightened. -- They're yelling at him. -- Everyone is shouting. -- People are kissing his feet. -- His clothes are dirty.

JOCASTA: Describe him.

KUPIA SMILES AT JOCASTA IN THE MIRROR.

KUPIA: His hair is pretty -- black -- like yours.

SHE TOUCHES JOCASTA'S HAIR. APHRON IS SHOCKED AND MOVES TO TAKE KUPIA'S HAND AWAY, BUT KUPIA SKIPS OFF.

And curly.

AGAIN, SHE LAUGHS.

His eyes are dark, very dark.

WE SEE JOCASTA'S DARK EYES WATCHING KUPIA.

And -- he's handsome. He's tall.

SHE MEASURES HIS HEIGHT WITH HER HANDS.

He might be a soldier.

SHE ADDS SOFTLY.

He limps.

LIGHTEARTEDLY KUPIA IMITATES OEDIPUS' LIMP

JOCASTA: SHE HAS BEEN LISTENING INTENTLY. BUT NOW, BREAKING HER MOOD, SHE SAY ACIDLY.

The stones of Thebes are very sharp.

KUPIA: THOUGHTFULLY, JOCASTA'S TONE HAS HURT HER.

The Sphinx might have hurt him.

JOCASTA: You may go, Kupia. Change your clothes.

KUPIA: He's as beautiful as Apollo, Queen Jocasta.

APHRON: Enough!

APHRON TRIES TO HURRY KUPIA FROM THE ROOM. KUPIA RESISTS, TAKING HER TIME AND, AGAIN, TRIES TO IMITATE OEDIPUS' WALK.

Hurry.

*

IN THE OUTER ROOM, KUPIA STOPS TO PICK UP HER BOW.

Hide that! The Queen could have been very angry.

KUPIA: Not today.

SHE RUNS TO THE DOOR, TURNS TO SAY:

I found some laurel leaves for a crown.

APHRON: Never mind that!

*

APHRON RETURNS TO JOCASTA AT HER DRESSING TABLE, PICKS UP THE VEIL AND PLACES IT ON JOCASTA'S HEAD.

JOCASTA: She's a sweet child.

APHRON: The hero's beauty will complement your Majesty's.

JOCASTA: Don't talk to me like a gossiping fool!

APHRON: Forgive me.

JOCASTA: I'm sorry, Aphron, I...

APHRON: My child, I pray only for your happiness.

HAEMON: ENTERING.

The Queen is happy, isn't she?

JOCASTA: Haemon.

SMILING, JOCASTA GOES TO HIM. THEY EMBRACE. HE KISSES HER CHEEK. THEY MOVE TO THE RECEPTION ROOM, APHRON FOLLOWS.

*

HAEMON: My aunt is the most beautiful woman in Thebes.

JOCASTA: You are late.

HAEMON: Did you send for me?

JOCASTA: Are my guards coming?

HAEMON: I didn't see them.

JOCASTA: My crown!

SHE LAUGHS NERVOUSLY.

I have forgotten my crown. Get it for me, Haemon, the -- emerald crown.

APHRON: Oh, your Majesty!

JOCASTA: It's in the chest.

HAEMON: HE HOLDS UP A PLAIN CIRCLET OF GOLD.

The Imperial crown?

JOCASTA: The Emerald crown.

HAEMON LIFTS THE EMERALD CROWN. IT IS EXTRAORDINARILY BEAUTIFUL. HE TURNS IT, ADMIRING IT. THE EMERALDS CATCH THE LIGHT, CASTING A GREEN SHIMMER ABOUT THE ROOM. **HAEMON MOVES TO STAND BEHIND JOCASTA.** AS HE RAISES THE CROWN WE HEAR THE SOUND OF MARCHING. **CREON'S GUARDS APPEAR IN THE DOORWAY.** THE FIRST OFFICER STEPS INTO THE ROOM.

JOCASTA LIFTS HER HEAD DEFIANTLY.

OFFICER: Your Majesty.

JOCASTA: My crown, Haemon

HAEMON PLACES THE EMERALD CROWN ON HER HEAD.

Thank you, Lord Haemon.

SHE REMAINS SEATED AND SILENT, FACING THE GUARDS.

OFFICER: We have orders to escort you to the throne room.

JOCASTA: Whose orders?

OFFICER: Prince Creon's

ANGRILY, HAEMON STARTS TOWARD THE GUARDS. JOCASTA RESTRAINS HIM.

JOCASTA: Never mind, the Prince will have his way.

JOCASTA STANDS AND LEADS THE GUARDS FROM THE ROOM.

*

IN THE HALL, THEY SURROUND HER IN THE SAME MANNER AS THE GUARDS SURROUNDED OEDIPUS. THE PROCESSION STARTS SLOWLY TOWARD THE THRONE ROOM. PUSHING PAST THE GUARDS, HAEMON HURRIES DOWN THE HALL.

*

FROM THE PALACE PORCH WE SEE THE INNER GATES AS THEY ARE OPENED TO ADMIT OEDIPUS AND THE PROCESSION. THEY ADVANCE TOWARD THE STEPS. THE GATE GUARDS, HARD PRESSED, FIGHT TO KEEP THE TOWNSPEOPLE OUT AND RE-CLOSE THE GATES. OEDIPUS PAUSES, TURNS, SHOCKED TO SEE THE FIGHTING. HE DESCENDS A STEP OR TWO, BUT THE SOLDIERS BLOCK HIS WAY. HE LOOKS TO ACMON, WHO SHAKES HIS HEAD. OEDIPUS LOOKS TOWARD THE PALACE AS THE GREAT DOORS OPEN AND THE HONOR GUARDS DESCEND THE STEPS. HAEMON, TOO, APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY, SEARCHING FOR CREON.

HAEMON SEES ACMON DIRECT THE HONOR GUARD TO STAND AROUND OEDIPUS. SURPRISED, HE STUDIES OEDIPUS. AFTER WATCHING THE SCENE CAREFULLY, TO BE SURE HE UNDERSTANDS THE SITUATION, HAEMON TURNS AND GOES INTO THE PALACE. NOW DOUBLY SURROUNDED -- THE HONOR GUARDS ON THE OUTSIDE, CREON'S GUARDS ON THE INSIDE -- OEDIPUS ADVANCES A FEW STEPS, THEN TURNS AGAIN TO LOOK AT THE REBELLIOUS CROWD. THE BATTLE IS OVER, THE GATES ARE RE-CLOSED. THE CROWD KNEELS -- AT FIRST, A FEW PEOPLE, THEN MORE AND MORE. OEDIPUS LOOKS QUESTIONINGLY AT ACMON.

ACMON: To their King.

OEDIPUS IS MOVED, UNCERTAIN. ACMON TOUCHES HIS ARM. THEY PROCEED SLOWLY UP THE GREAT STEPS

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HAEMON REACHES THE TOP OF THE INSIDE STAIRWAY AND RUNS DOWN THE CORRIDOR TO THE THRONE ROOM. HE LEANS AGAINST THE CLOSED DOORS TO CATCH HIS BREATH. THEN HE FLINGS THE DOORS OPEN.

HAEMON: Father!

*

INSIDE THE ALREADY CROWDED THRONE ROOM, PREPARATIONS FOR THE RECEPTION ARE STILL IN PROGRESS. CREON IS TALKING WITH A GROUP OF NOBLES. HE TURNS AT THE SOUND OF HAEMON'S VOICE. DISPLEASED, HE MOTIONS TO HAEMON TO BE QUIET AND TO STAY WHERE HE IS. BUT HAEMON PUSHES HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWD TOWARD CREON.

HAEMON: Father!

SHOUTING

Prince Creon!

THE ROOM QUIETS. ALL WATCH HAEMON AND CREON. CREON POINTEDLY LINGERS WITH THE GROUP HE HAS BEEN TALKING TO, BUT LEAVES IN TIME TO MEET HAEMON NEAR THE CENTER OF THE ROOM.

CREON: SMILING, REFUSING TO ACKNOWLEDGE HAEMON'S ANGER

Yes, Haemon, I'm glad to see you. Have you been running?

HE LAUGHS

I feel breathless myself.

HAEMON: HE SPEAKS DISTINCTLY AND VERY LOUDLY.

Jocasta is not a prisoner in this house!

CREON: GESTURES FOR HAEMON TO LOWER HIS VOICE, BUT SPEAKS PLEASANTLY.

That is true enough.

HAEMON: Why is she being forced to come here under armed guard?

CREON: WRPLY

Forced? Did she resist?

HAEMON: You think you can...

CREON: INTERRUPTING. A COMMAND, BUT STILL IN A QUIET VOICE.

Calm yourself. Your voice is quite unpleasant when...

HAEMON: By the Gods, I'll...

CREON: You'll stop screeching like a peacock!

CREON SAYS THIS LOUDLY ENOUGH TO BE OVERHEARD. THE NOBLES TURN TO EACH OTHER, A MURMUR OF TALK RESUMES.

HAEMON: IN A QUIETER, BUT MORE THREATENING TONE.

You may regret your tyranny.

CREON SNORTS CONTEMPTUOUSLY AT THE THREAT.

Have you seen the hero?

CREON STUDIES HAEMON.

Your scheme hasn't worked, Father.

CREON: Who is he?

HAEMON: I don't know.

CREON: And Acmon?

HAEMON: He is with the hero.

ABRUPTLY, CREON TURNS FROM HAEMON, MOTIONS TO A SOLDER NEAR THE DOOR AND ADVANCES TO MEET HIM.

CREON: Do you know Lord Acmon?

SOLDIER: PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO GIVE THIS ANSWER.

Very well, your Highness.

CREON: He is with the procession. You are to take four men and arrest him -- in the name of the Queen. Take him to prison.

THE SOLDIER IS SURPRISED AND DISMAYED.

HAEMON: LOUDLY, BRINGING THE ATTENTION OF MANY OF THE NOBLES

What is his crime?

CREON: See that he is well guarded.

IN THE BACKGROUND, JOCASTA AND HER GUARDS ENTER. SHE PAUSES IN THE DOORWAY, WATCHING. A FEW OF THE NOBLES MAKE PERFUNCTORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE QUEEN'S PRESENCE.

CREON: He must speak to no one; he is a traitor to the crown.

SOLDIER: HE HAS NOT SEEN JOCASTA ENTER THE ROOM, BUT, NOT WANTING TO CARRY OUT THE ORDER, HE SAYS:

I must have the Queen's word.

JOCASTA BEGINS TO WALK SLOWLY ACROSS THE ROOM, BUT NOT TOWARD THE SOLDIER OR CREON. CREON SEES HER, BUT NEITHER HIS TONE NOR HIS MANNER CHANGE. HE TAKES HIS DAGGER FROM ITS SHEATH AND OFFERS IT TO THE SOLDIER.

CREON: Give this to the warden.

SOLDIER: HE SEES THE QUEEN.

The Queen must...

CREON: HE REVERSES THE OFFERED DAGGER FROM HILT TO BLADE
OUT AND SAYS QUIETLY:

You might find cause to use this on yourself.

HE THEN OFFERS THE HILT AGAIN. THE SOLDIER TAKES IT, SIGNALS TO FOUR
SOLDIERS AND, TOGETHER, THEY EXIT.

HAEMON: You are a butcher!

TURNING FROM CREON, HE STARTS TOWARD JOCASTA. CREON
DETAINS HIM.

CREON: If he lived, he might be indiscreet.

HAEMON: Would you kill me, too? Having killed Jocasta's son, I don't suppose
killing your own would be -- so very different.

HAEMON WALKS AWAY.

CREON: Haemon!

HAEMON: FACING CREON AGAIN

Our new King may challenge your decrees.

CREON: Be silent.

CREON TURNS AWAY FROM HAEMON.

JOCASTA HAS CROSSED THE THRONE ROOM, AND THE DAIS ON WHICH THE
DOUBLE THRONE OF THEBES SITS, TO STAND ON THE STEPS TO THE BALCONY.

JOCASTA: TO A NOBLE

Whose death has Creon commanded?

NOBLE: IN MOCK ASTONISHMENT.

Madame?

JOCASTA: The Prince gave his dagger to that soldier.

NOBLE: I think you are mistaken.

HE MOVES AWAY.

STANDING NEARBY, **LORD DYMAS** MOVES TO THE QUEEN AND SAYS SOFTLY:

DYMAS: Acmon, my Lady.

JOCASTA: GENUINELY SURPRISED.

Why? He's Creon's friend.

DYMAS: My Queen, challenge the order, demand the reason.

JOCASTA: Are you my friend?

DYMAS: You are my Queen.

JOCASTA: LAUGHING SOFTLY, BITTERLY:

The Queen does not dare to challenge her brother.

HAEMON: COMES UP TO JOCASTA, TAKES HER HAND.

Challenge him.

JOCASTA: Show me which of these men would back me if I did

TO LORD DYMAS

If your advice is well meant, and you are my friend, I think you are one of very few among my nobles.

CREON: **FROM SOME DISTANCE AWAY, BECKONS TO LORD DYMAS.**

Lord Dymas.

JOCASTA SMILES AT LORD DYMAS, AND NODS. SHE AND HAEMON GO UP THE STEPS TO STAND BY THE BALCONY DOORS, LOOKING OUT.

DYMAS: **APPROACHING CREON.**

Your Highness?

CREON: You will stand at the door to announce the hero.

DYMAS: Very well, your Highness.

CREON TURNS TO ANOTHER NOBLE.

CREON: Stand with him. If there is any trouble...

HE NODS TOWARD AN OFFICER OF THE GUARD.

Tydeus is at your command.

CREON MOVES TOWARD THE BALCONY.

*

ON THE BALCONY HAEMON SPEAKS QUIETLY TO JOCASTA

HAEMON: He sent Acmon to answer the riddle.

JOCASTA: But it is a stranger.

CREON: HAVING APPROACHED THEM AND INDICATING THE CROWN AND JOCASTA'S GARMENTS

What's this? And this? Are you Aphrodite's priestess today? The state robes would have been more suitable.

HAEMON: INTERRUPTING

Where's Teiresias?

CREON: Teiresias? He was ill, I sent him home.

JOCASTA: I thought the Gods granted him not only wisdom, but perpetual health.

CREON: He's a very old man.

JOCASTA: And a kind one. I wish he were here. We feel he has concern for our well-being.

A FANFARE OF TRUMPETS IS HEARD FROM OUTSIDE. OEDIPUS IS ABOUT TO ENTER THE PALACE.

CREON: No doubt he will recover.

HE TURNS FROM JOCASTA AND HAEMON, AND STARTS DOWN THE STEPS.

*

AT THE FRONT OF THE PALACE, THE PROCESSION STANDS READY ON THE STEPS. THE TRUMPETS CONTINUE TO SOUND. THE DOORS OPEN.

ABOVE, ON THE BALCONY, UNNOTICED BY THE CROWD, STAND JOCASTA AND HAEMON. NEITHER OEDIPUS NOR THE CROWD SEES THEM. THE PROCESSION STARTS TO MOVE.

*

AS **OEDIPUS** ENTERS THE PALACE. HE GAZES AT HIS SURROUNDINGS. **ACMON** IS AMUSED AND PLEASED THAT **OEDIPUS** IS OBVIOUSLY IMPRESSED.

OEDIPUS: IN A HUSHED VOICE.

It's rather awful... frightening.

HE SMILES UNCERTAINLY AT **ACMON**. **ACMON** RETURNS THE SMILE.

And cold.

ACMON'S GRUNT OF LAUGHTER SHOWS HE GRIMLY AGREES.

Were your architects hired from Hades?

ACMON LAUGHS ALOUD. HE AND **OEDIPUS** WALK ON. WE LINGER ON THE PROCESSION PASSING BY.

*

THE PROCESSION ASCENDS THE INSIDE STAIRWAY. A LINE OF **ARMED GUARDS** MARCHES AT EITHER SIDE.

ACMON: When you come into the Queen's presence, you must kneel.

OEDIPUS: LIGHTLY.

One knee? Two knees? My heart may stop before I need to know.

ACMON: LAUGHING. HE'S ALREADY FOND OF **OEDIPUS** AND HUMOR IS RARE IN THE PALACE.

On your left knee. She'll ask you to rise.

OEDIPUS: Which only a God could do.

ACMON: You say, "I kneel to the Sovereign Queen of all Thebes." She'll ask you to

rise again. Then...

THE SOLDIERS TO ARREST ACMON STAND BLOCKING THE TOP OF THE STEPS, FORCING ACMON AND OEDIPUS TO STOP.

Yes?

ACMON IS ANNOYED. THEN, SUDDENLY, A NOTE OF FEAR IS MIXED WITH HIS ANGER.

What is it? Stand aside.

SOLDIER: You are under arrest -- by order of the Queen.

ACMON: For what?

SOLDIER: You are not to speak.

OEDIPUS: Arrest?

AS OEDIPUS TRIES TO STEP BETWEEN THE SOLDIERS AND ACMON, THE HONOR GUARDS LOWERS THEIR LANCES TO PREVENT HIM.

ACMON SEEING THE DAGGER IN THE SOLDIER'S HAND

I have seen that before...

THE SOLDIER LOWERS HIS EYES -- GUILTY.

...in the hand of a dead man's guard.

OEDIPUS: HORRIFIED

The Queen... ?

GUARD A: LEANING CLOSE TO OEDIPUS, WHISPERS:

...eats up little riddle solvers like you.

OEDIPUS' HEAD JERKS ROUND TO STARE AT THE GUARD.

ACMON: IN A DESPERATE WHISPER -- HIS WORDS TO OEDIPUS ARE ALMOST SIMULTANEOUS WITH THE GUARD'S

Not the Queen!

OEDIPUS TURNS TO ACMON, CONFUSED, ALARMED.

SOLDIER: TO ACMON

You must be silent.

ALTHOUGH IT IS A COMMAND, HIS SYMPATHY IS WITH ACMON. THE SOLDIERS LEAD ACMON DOWN THE STEPS. HE DOES NOT RESIST. THE PROCESSION PARTS TO MAKE WAY. THE EXPRESSIONS OF GOOD HUMOR, BROUGHT TO THE GUARDS' FACES BY ACMON'S AND OEDIPUS' LAUGHTER, CHANGE TO FEAR -- BOTH OF AND FOR ACMON. A GUARD TOUCHES OEDIPUS. HE TURNS, BUT DOES NOT PROCEED.

OEDIPUS: Why?

HE LOOKS FROM FACE TO FACE. NO ONE MEETS HIS GAZE. HE LOOKS AT THE CLOSED DOORS AT THE END OF THE CORRIDOR.

OFFICER OF THE HONOR GUARD: We must proceed.

THE GUARDS START TO MOVE. OEDIPUS WALKS WITH THEM RELUCTANTLY. THE PROCESSION REACHES THE GREAT DOORS. THOUGH WE HAVE SEEN THESE DOORS BEFORE, NOW IT IS THROUGH OEDIPUS' EYES WE STUDY THEM. THEY ARE CARVED WITH A DESIGN OF WRITHING SERPENTS, PRIMITIVE, SINISTER. SLOWLY, THE DOORS SWING OPEN.

GUARD B WHISPERS TO OEDIPUS

Not the Queen -- Creon. Creon.

OEDIPUS TURNS QUICKLY, BUT THE GUARD HAS ALREADY GONE THROUGH THE

SERPENT DOORS, AND OEDIPUS IS NOT EVEN SURE WHICH GUARD SPOKE.

*

AT EITHER SIDE OF THE THRONE ROOM STAND NOBLES IN COURT DRESS. BEHIND THEM, LINING THE WALLS, IS A DOUBLE ROW OF GUARDS, CREON'S MEN IN FRONT, JOCASTA'S BEHIND. OEDIPUS STOPS IN THE DOORWAY. DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM HIM IS THE UNOCCUPIED DOUBLE THRONE OF THEBES. CREON STANDS BESIDE IT FACING OEDIPUS. THE QUEEN, HER BACK TO THE ROOM, STANDS IN THE BALCONY DOORWAY, HAEMON, BESIDE HER.

LORD DYMAS: FROM BESIDE THE DOOR, ANNOUNCES:

The hero of Thebes. He whom the Gods have chosen to solve the Riddle of the Sphinx. He whom the Gods have sent to save our great land.

DYMAS LOOKS FROM OEDIPUS TO THE QUEEN. CREON TAKES A STEP FORWARD, THEN PAUSES. EVERYONE ELSE IS MOTIONLESS. JOCASTA TURNS SLOWLY. OEDIPUS, EVEN ACROSS THE DISTANCE OF THE VAST ROOM, IS IMMEDIATELY CAPTIVATED BY JOCASTA'S BEAUTY. HE WATCHES HER INTENTLY AS SHE DESCENDS THE STEPS. SHE MOTIONS FOR HIM TO ADVANCE. SLOWLY THEY MOVE TOWARD EACH OTHER. OEDIPUS, DAZZLED BY HIS SURROUNDINGS, BEGINS TO REGISTER THE ENORMITY OF THE OCCASION.

JOCASTA: SPEAKS SOFTLY, GENTLY, ALMOST AS IF TO A CHILD.

The hero?

OEDIPUS AND JOCASTA, STILL SEVERAL YARDS APART, STOP AND STAND MOTIONLESS. THERE IS SILENCE THROUGHOUT THE THRONE ROOM. THEN, WITHOUT TAKING HIS EYES FROM HER, OEDIPUS ADVANCES AND KNEELS.

OEDIPUS: Your Majesty.

HE BOWS HIS HEAD.

JOCASTA: GENTLY.

You are very young.

AFTER A MOMENT, **OEDIPUS LOOKS UP TO HER.**

You have outwitted the Sphinx. She is no more. Is that true?

AS SHE LOOKS DOWN AT **OEDIPUS' UPTURNED FACE, THE EMERALDS OF THE SERPENT CROWN, MOVING SLIGHTLY, CAUSE POINTS OF GREEN LIGHT TO DANCE ACROSS HIS FACE.**

OEDIPUS: HE SPEAKS QUIETLY, HIS WORDS SLOWED DOWN TO A DREAM LIKE PACE. HE IS AS HYPNOTIZED BY **JOCASTA** AS HE WAS BY **THE SPHINX.**

A winged creature, with the head of a woman, threatened my life. She said she would devour me if I did not solve her riddle. I solved it. And she.... she... laughed... and screamed... and flung herself from the cliff... and died at my feet. If that was the Sphinx, then the Sphinx is dead.

JOCASTA: Were you.... Frightened?

OEDIPUS: Frightened? I don't know, your Majesty. I don't think I was.

JOCASTA: THIS SEEMS TO PLEASE HER. SHE SMILES.

Indeed? Perhaps our fear has exaggerated this monster. Rise.

SHE GESTURES AND **OEDIPUS STANDS UP.**

What is your name?

OEDIPUS: Oedipus.

JOCASTA: AMUSED, SMILING, ALMOST LAUGHING.

Oedipus? That's a peculiar name, isn't it?

THE INTENSITY BETWEEN THEM IS BROKEN. A FEW OF THE

NOBLES ALSO RELAX, AMUSED.

OEDIPUS: SERIOUSLY.

It doesn't seem strange to me.

JOCASTA: SOBERED.

Of course. -- What was the answer?

OEDIPUS: PUZZLED, AS IF JUST WAKING.

Forgive me, your Majesty. What answer?

JOCASTA: The Riddle of the Sphinx. What was the answer?

OEDIPUS: Man.

JOCASTA: Man? I see. That doesn't sound very difficult. Was it?

OEDIPUS: No.

JOCASTA: But it is provocative.

CREON: STEPPING FORWARD.

A rather simple answer. No doubt, to a simple riddle.

HIS WORDS SHATTER THE SPELL THAT HAS ISOLATED JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS: It killed the Sphinx.

THE PEOPLE IN THE ROOM ARE STARTLED BY OEDIPUS' CHALLENGE.

CREON: Meaning?

OEDIPUS: Are you Creon?

CREON: I am.

OEDIPUS: Then you know what I mean.

JOCASTA TAKES A STEP FORWARD, FEARFUL, TRYING TO DEFLECT THE IMPENDING CONFLICT.

JOCASTA: Clever Oedipus. I'm not surprised the Sphinx fell at your feet. Tell me the riddle -- that brought death to so many of our men.

OEDIPUS: Don't you know the riddle, my Queen?

JOCASTA: Only those who've met the Sphinx know the riddle -- and they -- they are dead. She killed all those unable to answer her riddle.

OEDIPUS: TO CREON

Perhaps you know the riddle.

CREON: If you want to play games, the time is ill chosen.

OEDIPUS: Is death a game in Thebes? Answer the riddle of one man's death -- Lord Acmon.

A CURRENT OF SHOCK RUNS THROUGH THE ROOM.

Death for service?

CREON: You are a presumptuous boy.

OEDIPUS: LOUDER

I would like an answer.

CREON: I advise you to curb your curiosity.

OEDIPUS: I want to understand your Theban justice.

CREON: The functioning of our law does not require your understanding, nor your sanction.

OEDIPUS: He was sent to answer the riddle. I had already answered it. Of what is he guilty?

HAEMON: STEPS FORWARD, CAUTIONING.

Crimes abound in Thebes.

OEDIPUS: GLANCES AT **HAEMON**, BUT TURNS AGAIN TO **CREON**.

Creon...

CREON: I am Prince of this House.

OEDIPUS: Your Highness...

JOCASTA: HER VOICE IS NOT LOUD, BUT IN THE QUIET, TENSE ATMOSPHERE IT SOUNDS LIKE A SCREAM.

Oedipus!

CREON: ANGRILY TURNS TOWARD **JOCASTA**. SHE DRAWS BACK IN FRIGHT. **CREON** TURNS AGAIN TO **OEDIPUS**, SMILING PLEASANTLY.

The decrees of the Queen are not for you to question.

OEDIPUS: TO **JOCASTA**.

Was it your decree?

JOCASTA STARES AT **OEDIPUS**, SHAKING HER HEAD A LITTLE, MORE IN FEAR OF HIS RECKLESSNESS THAN IN DENIAL OF HIS QUESTION.

CREON: Your Majesty. Was it your decree? Does the Queen not hold the power of life and death in this House.

**ONE HAND RESTING ON HIS SWORD, HE TURNS FROM JOCASTA,
ABOUT TO SIGNAL THE GUARD.**

HAEMON: IN A FIERCE WHISPER.

No! Father...!

JOCASTA: WATCHING CREON, SHE SPEAKS IN A QUIET, DEAD VOICE, AS SHE TURNS TO OEDIPUS.

It was an unfortunate introduction to our court. I beg you to let it pass without further comment.

OEDIPUS: SURPRISED.

Your Majesty...

CREON: Enough! Your impudence is astonishing.

A FALTERING ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE TRUMPETS COMES IN OVER CREON'S WORDS. HIS HEAD JERKS UP TO STARE PAST OEDIPUS TOWARD THE DOOR. **KUPIA** HAS PERSUADED ONE OF THE TRUMPETERS AT THE DOOR TO MAKE THIS TRUMPET SALUTE. BUT THE YOUNG LAD, NERVOUS WITH HIS OWN COURAGE, MAKES ONLY A SHY, OFF KEY SOUND, AND BREAKS OFF AS EVERYONE TURNS TO STARE AT HIM -- AND AT **KUPIA**, WHO STANDS IN THE DOORWAY BEARING A LAUREL WREATH ON A PILLOW. THE TENSION IN THE ROOM IS BROKEN. SOME LAUGH. **KUPIA**, IN COMPLETE COMMAND OF HERSELF, POISED, SMILING, INNOCENT, WALKS STRAIGHT TO JOCASTA AND KNEELS. SHE EXTENDS THE PILLOW WITH THE WREATH ON IT. **JOCASTA** LOOKS AT **KUPIA** IN DUMB AMAZEMENT.

KUPIA: BRIGHT-EYED, MISCHIEVOUS, SHE WHISPERS:

The Laurels of Apollo, for the hero.

JOCASTA, REGAINING HER COMPOSURE, TAKES UP THE WREATH, AND TURNS TO OEDIPUS. KUPIA STEPS ASIDE. JOCASTA RAISES HER HANDS, MOVES TO OEDIPUS, AND PLACES THE WREATH ON HIS HEAD. SLOWLY, SHE LOWERS HER HANDS, THEN STEPS BACK. AGAIN OEDIPUS AND JOCASTA ARE ISOLATED IN THE SPELL OF THEIR MUTUAL ATTRACTION.

JOCASTA: We Thebans... present... the Laurel Crown of Victory ... to you. To...

SHE BREAKS OFF, HESITATES, LOOKS BACK TO EITHER SIDE.
HAEMON AND CREON STAND TOGETHER TO HER RIGHT.

Thank him, thank him for me. Reward him. I... Please...

SHE GOES QUICKLY OUT ONTO THE BALCONY. WE HEAR A CHEER FROM THE CROWD. CREON RESTRAINS HAEMON, WHO TRIES TO STEP FORWARD.

CREON: In the name of the city of Thebes, in the name of the Theban Council, in my name, and in that of Queen Jocasta, Sovereign of all this Land, I offer you our gratitude and gold, as was promised, a hundred weight in gold, for answering the Riddle of the Sphinx.

HE MOTIONS TO A PAGE WHO HAS BEEN STANDING NEARBY HOLDING A TRAY HEAPED WITH GOLD COINS.

This is but a token, the rest is held for your demand in our treasury.

THE PAGE STEPS FORWARD AND KNEELS. OEDIPUS LOOKS AT THE GOLD, AND SMILES. HE TURNS FROM LOOKING AT THE GOLD TO LOOK AT CREON AGAIN.

OEDIPUS: Thank you, your Highness.

HE LETS SOME OF THE COINS DROP THROUGH HIS FINGERS.

I had heard of a fabulous reward, as I walked through your streets.

CREON, AS ALERT AS A PANTHER, WATCHES OEDIPUS.

You are most generous.

CREON GIVES A CURT NOD, THEN TURNS AND GOES ONTO THE BALCONY TO JOIN JOCASTA. OEDIPUS MOTIONS FOR THE PAGE TO STEP BACK. HE IS ABOUT TO FOLLOW CREON, BUT HAEMON STEPS FORWARD. JOCASTA AND CREON CAN BE SEEN ARGUING IN THE BACKGROUND.

HAEMON: I, as Head of the Theban Council, wish to add my thanksgiving to that of Prince Creon. We owe you more than gold...

OEDIPUS WATCHES JOCASTA RATHER THAN HAEMON.

...for delivering us from the Sphinx. Your bravery buys freedom, salvation from the terror that has devastated this land. We bid you welcome...

SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE ABOVE:

CREON: ...insolent puppy, foolish and dangerous. You will bring this quickly to an end.

JOCASTA: Are you afraid of him, Creon?

SHE LAUGHS TAUNTINGLY.

HAEMON: CONTINUES:

...and beg you to remain in our city. Consider the gold but partial payment. If there is anything more you desire, ask, and, if it is within our power, it will be our pleasure to grant your wish.

AGAIN WE HEAR JOCASTA'S LAUGHTER.

OEDIPUS: CONTINUES TO STUDY JOCASTA, WHILE HE SPEAKS ABSENTLY.

Thank you, my Lord. I have been traveling for a long time.

THEN, DIRECTLY TO HAEMON:

I am grateful for your kindness. I humbly accept your offer of hospitality.

AGAIN HIS ATTENTION IS ATTRACTED TO THE BALCONY.

JOCASTA MOVES AWAY FROM CREON AND COMES TO THE BALCONY DOORWAY.

JOCASTA: Come here, handsome Oedipus. Show yourself to the people.

OEDIPUS HESITATES. JOCASTA ADDS GENTLY:

Come, don't be afraid. You can stand here, beside me.

SHE OFFERS HER HAND. OEDIPUS STILL HESITATES

HAEMON: The Queen offers her hand, take it. Take her hand.

AFTER A MOMENT, OEDIPUS TAKES THE QUEEN'S HAND AND THEY GO OUT ONTO THE BALCONY. WE HEAR A GREAT SHOUT FROM THE CROWD, AND REVERBERATING APPLAUSE.

CREON: ANGRILY TO HAEMON.

That was foolish.

HAEMON: Listen to the people, Father. The Queen will marry Oedipus.

CREON GIVES A SHORT CONTEMPTUOUS LAUGH AND WALKS AWAY FROM HAEMON.

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THE CROWD CHEERS JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS AS THEY STAND TOGETHER ON THE BALCONY. JOCASTA LOOKS OUT AT THE PEOPLE; OEDIPUS CONTINUES TO WATCH HER.

JOCASTA: They're in love with you.

OEDIPUS: A riddle solver?

JOCASTA: A hero. Who knows?

SHE SMILES, TURNING TO HIM.

Perhaps a God.

OEDIPUS: RETURNING HER SMILE.

No. A man.

CROWD: WITHIN THE CHEERING, WE HEAR SEPARATE SHOUTS,
REPEATEDLY, OF:

“Long Live The King!” “Long live the hero!” “The King!” “The Queen!”
“The King!”

OEDIPUS: Why did you assume Creon's guilt?

JOCASTA: It belongs to all our House.

OEDIPUS: Acmon was kind to me.

HAEMON, IN THE DOORWAY TO THE BALCONY, WATCHES AS A
LIGHT WIND BLOWS JOCASTA'S VEIL ACROSS HER FACE.

OEDIPUS LIFTS IT BACK. SHE SMILES AT HIM. **OEDIPUS** LETS
HIS HAND REST ON HER SHOULDER.

OEDIPUS: NODS TOWARD CREON

Who is he?

JOCASTA: Prince Creon? My brother.

OEDIPUS WITHDRAWS HIS HAND.

End of JOCASTA, PART I,
of a three part TELEVISION SERIES

JOCASTA

PART II

HAEMON COMES FORWARD TO STAND BESIDE OEDIPUS AND JOCASTA ON THE BALCONY. HE SMILES AT JOCASTA, BUT SHE DOES NOT RETURN HIS SMILE.

HAEMON: **TO OEDIPUS:**

The Laurels of Victory suit you.

OEDIPUS: Any man is pleased to receive them.

HAEMON: **TO JOCASTA:**

Did you tell Kupia to bring the laurels?

JOCASTA: No.

HAEMON AND JOCASTA AMUSED, BOTH LAUGH. OEDIPUS, OFFENDED, STARTS TO TAKE OFF THE WREATH. HAEMON STEPS IN FRONT OF JOCASTA TO STOP HIM.

HAEMON: Those leaves may have saved your life. You must be cautious.

MANY NOBLES HAVE COME ONTO THE BALCONY. OEDIPUS LOOKS FROM HAEMON TO JOCASTA, AND TO THOSE SURROUNDING HIM -- AND SAYS NOTHING.

*

CREON, WALKING ACROSS THE THRONE ROOM, PAUSES BY KUPIA.

CREON: Who told you to bring that thing?

KUPIA: The good God Apollo and my good sense.

CREON: You are a little serpent.

HE PINCHES HER CHEEK WITH A GRIMACE OF DISTASTE/DESIRE. SHE BACKS AWAY. **CREON** WALKS ON. SHE CALLS AFTER HIM.

KUPIA: I had a hard time finding enough leaves.

CREON SHRUGS, WALKS ON. AS HE APPROACHES A GROUP OF NOBLES, THEY STOP TALKING. **CREON** LOOKS FROM ONE TO ANOTHER, THEN, GAZES POINTEDLY, AT OEDIPUS.

CREON: Do you know him?

NO ONE RESPONDS.

A hero?

CREON TURNS TO A NOBLE.

Have the rooms in the north wing readied.

THE NOBLE NODS AND EXITS. **CREON** TURNS TO ANOTHER NOBLE.

CREON: Well, Branchus, what do you think of him?

BRANCHUS: Young... arrogant...

THERE IS A LOUD SHOUT FROM THE CROWD. BOTH BRANCHUS AND CREON LOOK TOWARD THE BALCONY FOR A MOMENT.

...potentially a threat, but...

CREON: Teiresias has already denounced him. But his mumblings won't convince everyone. We'll need...

THERE IS ANOTHER SHOUT.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, HAEMON, ALL LAUGHING, ENTER FROM THE BALCONY.

JOCASTA: To hear such joy! Haemon, we ought to have an annual riddle contest!

OEDIPUS: With the answer always the same.

JOCASTA: Yes. Man -- or -- wo-man.

OEDIPUS' SMILE MATCHES HERS, THEN HIS FACE SOBERS AS HE NOTICES SOMEONE ACROSS THE ROOM. POLYPHONTES IS HALF TURNED AWAY, TALKING WITH A SOLDIER. OEDIPUS, FROWNING, STUDIES HIM, THEN LOOKS INTENTLY FROM ONE FACE TO ANOTHER IN THE CROWDED ROOM.

JOCASTA Did you come from far away to save our city?

OEDIPUS: I didn't come to save Thebes.

HIS GLANCE RETURNS TO POLYPHONTES

I didn't even know I had until I met Lord Acmon.

THEN HE LOOKS AT JOCASTA.

JOCASTA: You might have turned back and gone another way.

OEDIPUS: Yes. Perhaps...

JOCASTA: How close to one's destiny can one be -- and still turn back.?

OEDIPUS: I had no destination.

JOCASTA: We act in darkness. Or is it better to say: destiny acts in us...?

SHE SMILES.

OEDIPUS: FINISHES HER THOUGHT.
...darkly.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM, CREON IS TALKING WITH A GROUP OF NOBLES.

NOBLE: Your offer is enticing.

CREON: See that my generosity is taxed.

BRANCHUS: Yes, my Lord.

CREON STARTS TOWARD OEDIPUS AND JOCASTA.

JOCASTA: CLAPS HER HANDS:

Lord Dymas, prepare quarters for our hero.

CREON: I will show the hero to his rooms.

JOCASTA: As you wish. Make him comfortable. Oedipus will be our guest for as long as he wishes.

OEDIPUS: I humbly thank you, most gracious Queen.

JOCASTA: You may go.

OEDIPUS MAKES A SLIGHT BOW AND STEPS AWAY FROM JOCASTA. CREON WALKS WITH OEDIPUS TOWARD THE DOOR. WANTING TO DETAIN HIM, JOCASTA SAYS:

You are limping. Are the stones of Thebes so cruel?

OEDIPUS: No, my Lady.

JOCASTA: Did the Sphinx hurt you?

OEDIPUS: SMILING.

No. Not at all.

JOCASTA: Do you always limp?

OEDIPUS: It's the reason for my peculiar name.

JOCASTA: Oh.

OEDIPUS: I was injured in an accident long ago.

JOCASTA: Did you have a different name before that?

OEDIPUS: I don't remember.

HAEMON: Perhaps one of our Theban doctors can correct the misfortune.

OEDIPUS: I wish it were possible.

JOCASTA: All things are possible.

CREON: Come.

CREON TAKES OEDIPUS' ARM. OEDIPUS PULLS AWAY, BUT JOCASTA NODS.
OEDIPUS THEN TURNS, GOES WITH CREON. CREON SIGNALS TO A GROUP OF GUARDS TO FOLLOW THEM AS THEY LEAVE THE THRONE ROOM.

JOCASTA: SHE CLAPS HER HANDS

All of you, you may go.

HAEMON: Since the court is gathered...

JOCASTA: No.

SHE CLAPS HER HANDS AGAIN.

You may go.

THE NOBLES, SOLDIERS, GUARDS BEGIN TO DISPERSE.

*

OEDIPUS AND CREON, WALKING DOWN A WIDE HALLWAY, ARE FOLLOWED BY FOUR OF CREON'S SOLDIERS AND TWO OF JOCASTA'S GUARDS -- ONE OF WHOM IS POLYPHONTES. BEHIND THEM, NOBLES, GUARDS AND SOLDIERS EMERGE FROM THE THRONE ROOM AND DISPERSE IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS. SOME FOLLOW OEDIPUS AND CREON AT A DISTANCE, BEFORE TURNING OFF INTO SIDE CORRIDORS.

CREON: I hope you're not in pain.

OEDIPUS: I'm quite used to it.

CREON: Where are you from?

OEDIPUS: Another land.

CREON: SMILING:

I could wish for a more specific answer.

OEDIPUS: I cannot give you a more specific answer.

CREON: Have you been traveling alone?

OEDIPUS: Alone.

CREON: And unarmed?

OEDIPUS: Unarmed.

CREON: That's perhaps foolish in this barren land. There are bandits on the highways, thieves. Do you always travel that way?

OEDIPUS: Your Highness?

CREON: Alone and unarmed.

OEDIPUS: I have no cause to carry weapons.

CREON: Of course. Thebes is a land of peace.

OEDIPUS: But not prosperous.

CREON: You are very outspoken.

OEDIPUS: I saw people in rags, hollow-eyed, hungry.

CREON: Every state has its beggars.

OEDIPUS: Villages abandoned...

THEY TURN A CORNER TO WALK DOWN ANOTHER CORRIDOR.

Would a prosperous land offer its Queen for the solving of a riddle?

CREON: I have heard such a rumor myself.

OEDIPUS: Your people seem to welcome the idea.

CREON: They talk of many things.

AFTER A MOMENT, CREON CONTINUES GOOD-NATUREDLY.

A hundred weight in gold is not a small sum. Kingdoms have been purchased for less.

OEDIPUS LOOKS AT HIM, BUT DOES NOT SPEAK. CREON SMILES.

You're an intractable lad.

THEY HAVE REACHED THE ROOMS IN THE NORTH WING.

We'll find time to become better acquainted.

*

ONE OF THE GUARDS OPENS THE DOOR. OEDIPUS AND CREON STEP INTO THE FIRST OF THE NORTH ROOMS.

I hope you will be comfortable.

OEDIPUS QUIETLY LOOKS AROUND THE ROOMS WHICH ARE MORE SUMPTUOUSLY FURNISHED THAN THE OTHER ROOMS OF THE PALACE. HOWEVER, THE FURNISHINGS ONLY PARTIALLY CONCEAL THE FACT THAT THESE ROOMS SERVE AS A PRISON.

There are games for your amusement, scrolls can be obtained if you read. The Queen maintains a library. I think there are other things more worthwhile, but... Works of our craftsmen...

OEDIPUS OPENS A DOOR INTO A SECOND ROOM WHERE THERE ARE NO WINDOWS. CREON CONTINUES:

If you are interested in armor, you'll find some in there. I collected it when I was a boy. My father was a great warrior.

OEDIPUS TURNS TO LOOK AT CREON WHO HAS REMAINED AT THE HALL DOOR.

My father, Menoeceus, son of the Queen of Thebes, governed this land before King Laius. There were great wars, glorious festivals, prosperity -- then -- famine and plague. The Gods wanted a sacrifice, a Sown Man's blood. My father jumped from the battlement -- to appease the Gods.

**OEDIPUS IS PUZZLED BY THIS INFORMATION -- AND WARY.
CREON CROSSES THE OUTER ROOM TO LOOK THROUGH A
BARRED WINDOW .**

These are the rooms Laius gave me as a boy. The Queen's, Jocasta's -- my sister's -- were across the hall. As you can see, we lacked for nothing. We were very happy children. Learning life, learning war, learning to rule. And now...

SMILING, TO BRIDGE OEDIPUS' LACK OF RESPONSE.

Now? Now, you have killed the Sphinx. Our venerable seer predicted that when the curse of the Sphinx was lifted, prosperity would return. Perhaps you noticed the two great tunnels through the cliffs.

OEDIPUS: An amazing accomplishment.

CREON: Long ago, the bronze bearing Minyans drained the Copaic fields and Hercules channeled the Cephissus river into the sea. My father began a project to recapture that water to feed new land. One day the desert will bloom -- to the horizon -- from each of Thebes' seven gates.

OEDIPUS: A wonderful vision.

CREON: King Laius was killed recently.

IT TAKES A MOMENT FOR CREON TO DECIDE TO GO ON -- (HE'S NOT USED TO CRITICIZING THE KING, DEAD OR ALIVE.)

He brought much treasure from his wars, but he lived in splendor within our -- poverty -- like a Pharaoh. Demanding sustenance for his army, he ravaged the land, always demanding *more* from our treasury -- it is almost empty. Now the land is... As you have seen. Renewal is difficult, endless, dangerous, the people...

OEDIPUS: I would like to rest.

CREON: Forgive my dreaming. You cannot love this land as I do.

OEDIPUS: I am very tired.

CREON: Perhaps you will remain with us to witness a new golden age in Thebes.

OEDIPUS: I have walked your land, it is beautiful. I have seen your Queen, she is beautiful.

CREON: A BIT TAKEN ABACK BY THIS -- THREAT?

If you need anything, there will be soldiers outside your door to attend to your wishes.

OEDIPUS: My humble thanks.

CREON: Food will be sent.

OEDIPUS: The weary traveler appreciates your generosity, Prince Creon.

CREON: A pleasant rest.

CREON LEAVES. **OEDIPUS CLOSES THE DOOR.** ALONE, HE REMOVES THE LAUREL WREATH AND DROPS IT ON A TABLE CIRCLING A SMALL STATUE OF THE CRETAN SNAKE GODDESS. HE BEGINS TO EXAMINE THE ROOMS.

*

CREON TALKING WITH THE GUARDS OUTSIDE OEDIPUS' DOOR.

CREON: Admit no one. Inform me of anyone who comes.

GUARD: Yes, my Lord.

CREON: I could be persuaded of a year's pay to know who he is.

HE DISMISSES THREE OF THE GUARDS:

Return to your quarters. Order refreshments for our guest.

GUARD: From the soldier's kitchen?

CREON: Our hero has no doubt been a soldier.

CREON GOES TOWARD THE THRONE ROOM. THE THREE GUARDS GO IN ANOTHER DIRECTION. POLYPHONTES, WHO WEARS THE GOLD UNIFORM OF THE QUEEN'S GUARDS, IS ONE OF THE THREE REMAINING GUARDS, THE OTHER TWO WEAR CREON'S BLUE.

*

THE THRONE ROOM IS EMPTY, EXCEPT FOR JOCASTA -- WHO STANDS IN THE DOORWAY TO THE BALCONY -- AND HAEMON, ACROSS THE ROOM, WHO SOUNDLESSLY CLOSES THE GREAT DOORS AS THE LAST OF THE NOBLES LEAVE. THEY REMAIN, FOR A WHILE, ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ENORMOUS EMPTY ROOM. THEN HAEMON CROSSES TO JOCASTA, WHO TURNS, SEES HIM, AND TURNS AWAY AGAIN TO WATCH THE RESTLESS CROWD WHICH STILL LINGERS BEYOND THE GATES.

HAEMON: Announce your marriage.

JOCASTA SHAKES HER HEAD.

*

A MINOR SCUFFLE BREAKS OUT BETWEEN SOME TOWNSPEOPLE AND TWO OF THE SOLDIERS. JOCASTA STEPS FORWARD, JUST ENOUGH TO BE SEEN BY A FEW PEOPLE, AND RAISES HER HAND. THE SCUFFLE IS QUICKLY BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL, AND IS FOLLOWED BY SOME LAUGHTER.

*

HAEMON: They will give their loyalty to Oedipus, to you. It will give you the power to succeed.

JOCASTA: Power -- is that what I need? I offered my hand to defy Creon. I didn't expect the hero to be younger than you are.

HAEMON: Does that matter? He's strong, unafraid to speak. You and I have always loved each other. What does his age matter -- if he is as brave as he seems?

JOCASTA. SHE IS SILENT FOR A LONG TIME.

Creon sold me to Laius -- to shore up his claim to the throne. I asked him, Creon -- my brother, your father -- to make love to me. I wanted to be loved by someone I love, someone who loved me, before Laius -- our rapacious uncle -- raped me. Does that shock you?

HAEMON: You need an ally. Oedipus has already challenged Creon.

JOCASTA: You don't answer me.

HAEMON: I think I knew, my love, long ago.

JOCASTA: I must find peace, the will to rule -- within myself.

SHOUTING FROM THE CROWD IS HEARD.

HAEMON: They'll not wait long. They'll fight for a new king.

JOCASTA: TEARS COME INTO HER EYES

Creon and I have shared everything since childhood. We share the same vision of this land -- orchards everywhere, abundance, persimmons, oranges, figs, a cornucopia. He taught me, ruled me.

I've seen him beat a man to death with his bare hands. He and Laius used soldiers like fighting cocks. "Now," Laius would command: "one of you will survive." Blood splashed, Laius laughed, Creon drank and bet fortunes against him. You were too young to join in our festivities.

I have seen Creon walk naked in the rain, kiss the earth, weep for its bounty. But he is a warrior, a Greek warrior from Thebes -- the most warring realm of Boeotia. He loves our land, but he loves bloodshed more.

I read, I studied, I tried to understand a nature so divided, such cruelty, such tenderness. He would hold me in his arms to describe the killing, the dying, the fighting, the hunting. He can't forget that he was born to be a king. Perhaps a God might have the power to curb his nature.

HAEMON: Perhaps Oedipus can.

JOCASTA: More bloodshed? A peaceful king? Can *I* be a peaceful queen?

HAEMON: Creon is ready to call out the soldiers. "Down with the House of Laius" -- can you hear them?

JOCASTA TURNS INTO THE ROOM, PAUSES BESIDE THE DOUBLE THRONE, TAKES THE EMERALD CROWN FROM HER HEAD. MORE SHOUTING IS HEARD.

JOCASTA: I am sick of bloodshed.

HAEMON: The people are hungry. It's their blood that will be shed. Marry Oedipus. Let the people give you your freedom -- and *power*.

HAEMON LIFTS HER HAND THAT HOLDS THE CROWN.

HAEMON: Put it on.

TOGETHER THEY PLACE THE CROWN ON HER HEAD. HAEMON EMBRACES HER. FOR A MOMENT SHE ALLOWS HERSELF TO RELAX IN THE SECURITY OF HIS ARMS. THEN SHE STEPS BACK.

JOCASTA: I need to think. I must go to my room. I need to think.

HAEMON: Act, Jocasta. It is time to act.

SHE STARTS DOWN THE STEPS. HAEMON PUTS HIS ARM AROUND HER AS THEY WALK SILENTLY ACROSS THE THRONE ROOM.

[IF ONE WANTS TO DIVIDE PART I AND PART II LATER THAN PAGE 60, IT MIGHT BE DONE HERE , PAGE 73]

*

SOLDIERS LINE THE INSIDE PERIMETER OF THE PALACE COURTYARD. THE AFTERNOON SUN BEGINS TO CAST SHADOWS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE GATES ACROSS THE COURTYARD. WE HEAR OCCASIONAL SHOUTS, BITS OF SONG, SOME CHEERING.

*

AT THE TOP OF THE PALACE STEPS, CREON TALKS TO A SOLDIER, THEN HE ENTERS THE PALACE. THE SOLDIER COMES DOWN INTO THE COURTYARD AND, IN A MOMENT, HIS ORDER ECHOES DOWN THE LINE OF SOLDIERS

SOLDIERS: Clear the courtyard. Clear the palace courts. Clear the palace courts, etc.

THE CROWD FALLS SILENT, BUT NO ONE LEAVES. THE ORDER IS REPEATED AND ECHOED DOWN THE LINE AGAIN. THE CROWD REMAINS SILENT AND STILL. FROM THE ATTITUDE OF THE SOLDIERS AND THE CROWD, WE SENSE THAT "Clear the palace courts," IS A TRADITIONAL, SOMEWHAT RHETORICAL ORDER WHICH THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY NECESSITY TO ENFORCE.

*

IN JOCASTA'S RECEPTION ROOM, KUPIA IS LYING IN THE SUN ON THE FLOOR NEAR THE BALCONY DOORS, READING FROM A PAPYRUS SCROLL. APHRON IS SETTING OUT FOOD ON A SMALL TABLE. AS KUPIA HEARS THE SOLDIERS ORDERING THE COURTYARDS TO BE CLEARED, SHE GETS UP AND GOES TO LOOK OVER THE BALUSTRADE.

APHRON: Come in from there!

KUPIA: Will the Queen ride today?

APHRON SHRUGS

May I ride without her.

APHRON: Certainly not.

KUPIA: What's going to happen, Mother?

APHRON: I'm not a prophet. Ask Teiresias.

KUPIA: Did you see the hero?

KUPIA TAKES SOME GRAPES AND A FIG FROM THE TABLE.

APHRON: Kupia! You must not eat the Queen's fruit.

KUPIA: There isn't any other. Will she marry the hero?

APHRON: Pick up the scrolls. You take advantage of the Queen's generosity.

KUPIA: I wonder if he can read as well as I can?

APHRON: What nonsense.

KUPIA: When will I marry, mother?

APHRON: I pray the Gods you'll remain a virgin.

KUPIA: Didn't you like being married, mother?

APHRON: Enough. Enough. Get your things.

KUPIA: AS SHE IS PICKING UP THE SCROLLS, SHE SAYS:

I have never seen the Queen look more beautiful. I would like to be in love.

APHRON: You fill your head with foolishness. The Queen will marry because it is her duty.

KUPIA: The Prince might kill him.

APHRON: Hush! You must be careful of Creon.

KUPIA: I was in the throne room, Mother. I could feel the Queen's heart beating. Oedipus, heard it, too. If I were the Queen, I would have married him then. Do you know where they've taken him? -- to the north rooms. They've taken Acmon to prison.

JOCASTA AND HAEMON ENTER AT THIS MOMENT. HAVING OVERHEARD THE LAST OF KUPIA'S WORDS, JOCASTA SMILES.

JOCASTA: You're better than a whole system of spies.

APHRON: MOTIONING FOR KUPIA TO LEAVE THE ROOM

If you teach a girl to read and write, she's beyond control.

JOCASTA: She's a huntress, Aphron -- and very brave. Let her shoot her arrows -- we will survive.

TO KUPIA

The hero is, perhaps, too recklessly unafraid of Creon. But you, brave Kupia, should not be unafraid of Creon. He is a dangerous man.

APHRON: He is a dangerous man. He is...

JOCASTA: SURPRISED AT THE INTERRUPTION, SHE HOLDS HER HAND UP TO SILENCE APHRON. TO KUPIA:

Those leaves may have saved Oedipus. But they will not save you.

KUPIA: Only those you love can hurt you.

APHRON: What nonsense.

JOCASTA: TO KUPIA

Why do you say that? Come here.

APHRON: Go to your room. You must not speak foolishness to the Queen.

JOCASTA IS STARTLED BY THE COUNTERMANDING OF HER ORDER. SHE TURNS AWAY.

JOCASTA: Creon always wins.

KUPIA: Not any more.

APHRON: Not any more. Not in here.

JOCASTA: Give her the fruit, Aphron.

KUPIA LAUGHS WITH DELIGHT.

APHRON: I thought your Majesty might be hungry.

JOCASTA: Give it to her. We will ride later, Kupia, you and I. You may be the only one in this palace happy enough to laugh, young enough to tell the truth.

KUPIA: **TAKES THE BOWL OF FRUIT.**

Maybe one other.

JOCASTA: Perhaps.

AS KUPIA LEAVES THE ROOM.

We'll ride across the desert...

HAEMON: You must rest.

APHRON: Your Majesty should eat. I'll get more for Lord Haemon.

JOCASTA: Never mind, please go.

HAEMON HELPS HER TO TAKE OFF HER VEIL AND CROWN.

Wait. Take food to Oedipus. And he must have clothes. See to that,

Aphron.

HAEMON: Take my things for him -- whatever you wish. My man will get them for you.

JOCASTA: Thank you, Haemon.

APHRON STARTS OUT.

HAEMON: And, Aphron...

HE OPENS A DRAWER IN A CHEST, TAKES OUT A GOLD DAGGER, WRAPS IT IN JOCASTA'S VEIL AND, GLANCING AT JOCASTA WHO GIVES A BARELY PERCEPTIBLE NOD, HANDS IT TO APHRON.

Take this to him. Conceal it.

AGAIN HE GLANCES AT JOCASTA.

Say: "It's a present from the Queen."

APHRON TAKES THE DAGGER AND, WITH A SLIGHT BOW, LEAVES THE ROOM.

JOCASTA: You think he's in danger?

HAEMON: A prisoner is always in danger. You must fight Creon's... his stranglehold on the soldiers, the guards .

JOCASTA: How? With my hands?

HAEMON: With Oedipus. Marry him.

JOCASTA: And Oedipus? Would he choose to marry me? -- to risk his life against Creon? For a moment he was angry -- that's all. He's not a Theban.

HAEMON: He would risk his life for you.

JOCASTA WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THIS, BUT... SHE MOVES TO THE BALCONY DOORS, HAEMON FOLLOWS HER.

Do you think Creon will pack up his gold and wish him a happy journey?
No wonder they call you the Mad Queen.

JOCASTA: Am I mad? I was not trained to rule.

HAEMON: Then let Creon rule.

JOCASTA: No.

HAEMON: Would you be less than a Queen?

JOCASTA: No.

HAEMON: Perhaps you are mad.

JOCASTA: Coercion, Haemon? Cut down my brother? Force Oedipus to choose -- our land?

HAEMON: Choose you! -- Jocasta! And you must *choose* him.

JOCASTA: A SLIGHT INTAKE OF BREATH, THEN, TO HIDE HER FEAR OF COMMITMENT:

Kill or be killed. Is that the whole human story? Death. More death. Even you, that's the first thing you think of: If he's in danger, send him a weapon. I would keep the peace. The Queen's consort must keep the peace. No more wars, executions...

HAEMON: You can't philosophize with a warrior... a murderer.

JOCASTA: But we must! He's my brother.

HAEMON: My father.

CREON'S VOICE: Haemon!

JOCASTA: He conquers everywhere.

AS CREON ENTERS THE ROOM, JOCASTA TURNS AND WALKS TOWARD THE BEDROOM. THEN TURNS WITH A CHALLENGING SMILE TOWARD CREON.

If peace brings life, what is death? Creon? Can you answer that riddle? if life is peace, will death be more peaceful?

CREON: I'm pleased to see you in such high spirits.

JOCASTA: Answer me!

CREON: Whose life?

JOCASTA: All life. All that grows, lives, finds happiness.

CREON EATS FROM THE FOOD ON THE TABLE.

CREON: It's a pity our gardens have withered. We could walk in the shade, discuss the ideas of our tutor.

JOCASTA: Does death answer all questions?

CREON: Death is death. It brings an end.

JOCASTA: What about murder?

CREON: Life begins -- in the mother's womb.

JOCASTA: Yes.

CREON: It lives, and eventually it dies. Is your riddle answered?

JOCASTA: You are a merciless...

CREON: The Sphinx killed her unlucky victims, devoured them. Haemon, can you

answer our Queen's riddle? She does not know the answer. I do not know the answer.

HAEMON: Oedipus has been sent by the Gods to rule Thebes.

CREON: Ah! Is *that* the answer? Jocasta? Yes? No?

TO HAEMON

Do you think, Haemon, Prince Haemon, my son, that solving a riddle qualifies a man to become king?

HAEMON: If it had been another man...

CREON: It is not another man!

TO JOCASTA

But he is handsome -- and young. No doubt he would make a delightful husband -- after Laius.

HAEMON: Father!

CREON: Come now, Haemon. Jocasta's human. Worlds have been won and lost for the color of a young man's eyes. Of course, you know nothing of that. It's time to unlock the Seven Gates of Thebes. Would you see to that?

HAEMON DOES NOT MOVE. CREON CONTINUES IRONICALLY.

I beg leave to speak with the Queen.

HAEMON STILL DOES NOT MOVE. CREON SHOUTS.

Leave us!

HAEMON TURNS AND STARTS OUT. SHOUTING IS HEARD FROM THE CROWD. HAEMON TURNS BACK TO CREON.

HAEMON: Father, Thebes is in danger. If anything happens to Oedipus...

CREON: Why, what would happen to Oedipus? I am not a magician. I am with the Queen. Then I will have my supper. Perhaps if you have seen to the gates, you will join me for supper.

HAEMON: If the Queen does not marry Oedipus...

CREON: Very likely she will marry someone else!

JOCASTA: GENTLY

Haemon. Please go. Please.

WHEN HAEMON IS ALMOST TO THE DOOR.

I left my veil in the throne room. Would you get it for me? Please.

**HAEMON HESITATES FOR A SINGLE STEP, BUT DOES NOT TURN.
HE EXITS.**

CREON: I don't think Haemon understands you. Your veil! The emerald crown!

HE HOLDS HER FACE TOWARD THE LIGHT.

I think you've painted your lips, too. Yes, Jocasta, you are beautiful. The scent of musk is unmistakable. You wonder what the source of life is? Ask the bitch, the mare, the she-cat -- they can tell you.

HE KISSES HER ON THE LIPS. SHE NEITHER RESPONDS NOR STEPS AWAY. SHE CLOSES HER EYES.

Why your withdrawal? Why?

Look at me. I'm your brother. Are you afraid? No?

SHE DOES NOT MOVE OR SPEAK.

Oedipus is young enough to be your son.

SHE STARES DEFIANTLY AT HIM. HE CRIES IN A SUDDEN RAGE.

By the Gods, we are blessed that your son *is* dead!

JOCASTA: QUIETLY

There's blood on your hands.

QUITE INVOLUNTARILY CREON LOOKS AT HIS HANDS.

My blood. Your own blood, too.

CREON: Would you defy the Gods?

JOCASTA: The Gods? You spoke with the Gods, didn't you? Lip to lip with the Gods. How did you make Laius believe it? If they spoke, it's you who defied them.

CREON: You'd have reveled in the fulfillment of that prophecy.

JOCASTA: Laius is dead and my son didn't kill him. Did you make Laius think he was immortal?

CREON: Who did kill Laius?

JOCASTA: STARTLED, SHE STARES AT HIM.

What do you mean?

CREON: Do you mourn him? -- your husband and your king.

JOCASTA: He was killed by bandits.

CREON: A king? I should think bandits would have ransomed a king. Unless they had... reasons... One hears rumors... Of course, rumors disappear if one finds out the truth.

HE SMILES. JOCASTA WATCHES HIM CAREFULLY. HE SHRUGS.

If one feels free to travel unarmed through the desert, on strange highways -- it's dangerous out there, a king was killed -- one might have strange friends... Bandits? A young traveler...?

JOCASTA GRABS THE FRUIT KNIFE FROM THE TABLE TO STRIKE AT CREON.

JOCASTA: You won't murder him!

CREON SQUEEZES HER WRIST. SHE DROPS THE KNIFE.

CREON: AMUSED.

It is only speculation, Jocasta. Idle speculation.

JOCASTA: I would kill you if I could.

CREON: For a boy from nowhere? You tempt him with a crown. Will he accept? Oh yes, Jocasta, he will accept anything to have it.

HE TURNS HER TO FACE A FULL LENGTH MIRROR ON THE WALL.

Look at yourself. And think of him.

HE RELEASES HER ARM, AND AT THE SAME TIME PUSHES HER SO THAT SHE STUMBLES AGAINST THE MIRROR.

The lust of a Queen is as blind as the lust of the Gods.

AFTER A FEW MOMENTS LEANING AGAINST THE MIRROR, TURNING, HER BACK TO THE WALL, JOCASTA RECOVERS AND SPEAKS WITH A NEW, NOT QUITE ARROGANT AUTHORITY.

JOCASTA: I am the Queen. My word is the law. And -- I have a kingdom to offer.

CREON: You? rule? You've never paid any attention to the crown -- other than that emerald bauble you're so fond of. You rule? You're a wife -- though not

much of one. A child bride. You can't want to rule. Replace Laius? Why, you couldn't bring yourself to sit beside him -- or -- even kill him.

JOCASTA: Did you murder him?

CREON: Your madness peeps out even now.

JOCASTA: I didn't kill him. Did you?

CREON: No one's suggested you did. Ah, is this a diversion -- from the boy?

JOCASTA: He's not a murderer! I'm not. The murderers I know are my brother, and the king you bartered me for. But you'll not kill an innocent boy -- who, by chance! -- ended this... this terrorism? -- this destruction of Thebes you've caused accidentally? Intentionally? -- I'll talk to Acmon. He's a decent man. What bargain did you strike with him? Did you think he wanted to be my husband? Did you think I just wanted another man in my bed?

CREON: I did love you once -- as a girl, as my sister, my innocent, virgin sister afraid of her wedding night. You were so beautiful Jocasta. Breathtakingly childlike -- beautiful, innocent.

JOCASTA: You changed all that, didn't you?

CREON: You've changed it with your everlasting mourning, studying, philosophizing -- What good has it all done? Reading! Ha! Reading is not ruling.

JOCASTA: I changed when you began to teach me your kind of politics: the deals, the bargains, how to take from the poor and give to the rich, how to create wars! glory! wars! terror! wars! wars! There are people all over Boeotia we have conquered and robbed. To what end? Why? For the fun of it?

CREON: You've always enjoyed the fruits of empire.

JOCASTA: You insisted I sit on the Council! You thought it would distract me from grief. It did. I learned all kinds of clever, shrewd things. I learned your schemes, your ways. And I reject them.

CREON: To marry a pretty puppet. I didn't realize what you were up to when you offered your hand.

JOCASTA: I wanted to stop our monstrous inheritance, the sordid fate that possesses this House. But *you* sent out the riddle solvers. You! Now, destiny has cheated you. A stranger has wandered in. Someone beyond your control. Someone I *could* love.

CREON: O Gods! spare me insight into the affairs of your heart.

CREON STRIDES FROM THE ROOM. JOCASTA PUSHES HERSELF FROM THE MIRROR AND MOVES TOWARD THE BEDROOM, UNFASTENING HER GOWN.

*

THE COURTYARD AT THE BACK OF THE PALACE IS EMPTY EXCEPT FOR TWO GUARDS AND A SOLDIER. THE GUARDS OPEN THE GATE FOR THE TWO SOLDIERS WHO ACCOMPANIED ACMON TO THE SPHINX. BETWEEN THEM, THEY CARRY A LITTER ON WHICH THE DEAD SPHINX LIES. HER BODY IS COVERED WITH A CLOTH, A BROKEN WING PROTRUDES. ON THE BALCONY, ABOVE THIS COURTYARD, KUPIA STANDS WATCHING.

SOLDIER: Take it to the inner court.

KUPIA LEAVES THE BALCONY.

*

AT OEDIPUS' DOOR, THE THREE GUARDS ARE RELAXED, CHATTING.

2ND GUARD: A year's pay?

POLYPHONTES: Maybe.

2ND GUARD: You know what I'd do?

3RD GUARD: Get out of Thebes.

POLYPHONTES: If Creon would let you.

2ND GUARD: Ah, the gates'll be unlocked now.

POLYPHONTES: I wouldn't be too sure.

2ND GUARD LOOKS QUESTIONINGLY AT POLYPHONTES.

APHRON APPROACHES WITH SEVERAL GARMENTS DRAPED OVER HER ARM.

APHRON: Is this where the hero is?

3RD GUARD: Yes, Ma'am

APHRON: I have some clothes for him.

2ND GUARD: We can't let you in.

APHRON: They're sent by the Queen.

3RD GUARD: Can't do it.

APHRON: Does Creon want him to go naked?

2ND GUARD SHRUGS, LOOKS AT 3RD GUARD, WHO LAUGHS, SUGGESTIVELY.

2ND GUARD: He's not naked -- Apollo save you if he was.

POLYPHONTES: STEPPING TOWARD APHRON.

I'll take them in for you.

APHRON: I was told to give them to him myself.

POLYPHONTES: I'll give them to him...

WHISPERING.

...for the Queen.

APHRON HESITATES, THEN SHE HANDS HIM THE GARMENTS AND THE VEIL-WRAPPED DAGGER.

APHRON: This is a present from the Queen. Will you say that to him?

POLYPHONTES NODS. APHRON STARTS TO WALK AWAY, TURNS BACK.

APHRON: I'll be sending him some food. I hope you'll let him eat.

2ND GUARD: To keep up his strength!

3RD GUARD: For the Queen!

THEIR QUIPS ARE FOLLOWED BY RAUCOUS LAUGHTER

*

POLYPHONTES STEPS INTO OEDIPUS' ROOM AND SHUTS THE DOOR. HE DOES NOT SEE OEDIPUS, WHO STANDS STUDYING A MAP OF THEBES ON THE WALL OF AN ALCOVE. POLYPHONTES DROPS THE CLOTHES ON A BENCH, BUT KEEPS THE VEIL WRAPPED DAGGER. HE DRAWS HIS SWORD. OEDIPUS, TURNS AND, NOW SURE HE RECOGNIZES POLYPHONTES, STEPS FORWARD.

OEDIPUS: Will you kill me now? I have no weapons, nor did I before.

POLYPHONTES: SHEATHES HIS SWORD

The Queen has sent you a present.

HE HANDS THE VEIL-WRAPPED DAGGER TO OEDIPUS, WHO, FEELING WHAT IT IS, STARTS TO UNWRAP IT.

Don't unwrap it now.

OEDIPUS: Why not?

POLYPHONTES: I'd rather not know what it is.

OEDIPUS: You already know what it is.

HE FINISHES UNWRAPPING THE DAGGER.

From the Queen?

POLYPHONTES: GLANCES AT THE DOOR.

Hide it. You're not safe. Do you know who it was that you killed on the highway?

OEDIPUS: I killed no one.

POLYPHONTES: In Phocis?

OEDIPUS: I killed no one.

POLYPHONTES: I saw.

OEDIPUS: What did you see? Do you want me to buy your silence? Speak if you want to. I killed no one.

POLYPHONTES STUDIES OEDIPUS FOR A MOMENT, THEN TURNS TO LEAVE.

Take me to the Queen.

POLYPHONTES: I can't help you.

OEDIPUS LOOKS AT THE DAGGER IN HIS HAND.

You'll never get by the other guards.

POLYPHONTES EXITS. OEDIPUS STANDS FOR A MOMENT LOOKING AT THE

DAGGER, THEN THROWS IT ON THE BED.

*

POLYPHONTES, LEANS AGAINST THE CLOSED DOOR, THE TWO GUARDS LOUNGE ON EITHER SIDE OF HIM.

*

IN THE SUNLIGHT OF THE INNER COURTYARD, TWO GUARDS STAND RIGIDLY AT ATTENTION. THE DEAD SPHINX, STILL COVERED, LIES ON A LITTER BETWEEN THEM. **JOCASTA** AND **KUPIA**, DRESSED IN RIDING CLOTHES, ENTER. IT TAKES A FEW MOMENTS FOR THEIR EYES TO ADJUST TO THE LIGHT. **KUPIA** WALKS TO THE SPHINX AND LIFTS THE CLOTH. THE SPHINX HAS BEEN PUT BACK TOGETHER -- APPROXIMATELY -- STIFF, PATCHED, SECTIONS OF IT ARE BOUND LIKE A MUMMY, HER FACE RESEMBLES THAT OF A RENAISSANCE ANGEL. **JOCASTA** REGARDS IT WITH A FRIENDLY, QUESTIONING EXPRESSION. **KUPIA** STUDIES **JOCASTA**, THEN HER ATTENTION WANDERS ABOUT THE COURTYARD. AFTER AWHILE, TO BREAK THE SILENCE, SHE SAYS:

KUPIA: She looks sweet.

JOCASTA LAUGHS SILENTLY.

No wonder Creon doesn't want the people to see her. Do you suppose she came from Egypt?

SHE MOVES TOWARD THE DOOR. **KUPIA**, SMILING AT THE GUARD, PULLS A FEATHER FROM THE SPHINX'S WING, THEN FOLLOWS **JOCASTA**. THE GUARDS LAY THE CLOTH BACK OVER THE BODY.

*

JOCASTA AND **KUPIA** WALK IN SILENCE DOWN THE DARK STONE PASSAGEWAY. A SMILE FORMING ON HER LIPS, **JOCASTA** WHISPERS TO HERSELF:

JOCASTA: I think I shall marry the hero.

KUPIA: LAUGHS WITH DELIGHT.

Yes, your Majesty.

SHE HANDS THE FEATHER TO JOCASTA.

Here.

JOCASTA: What is it?

KUPIA: A present.

JOCASTA TAKES IT, PUZZLED.

From the Sphinx

JOCASTA: HARSHLY

Sometimes your antics show a want of good sense!

JOCASTA, HOWEVER, KEEPS THE FEATHER AND TWISTS IT SLOWLY BACK AND FORTH, AS SHE WALKS.

I want to see Teiresias. Go for him, please. Now. Can you get in at the East Gate?

KUPIA NODS.

I will be in the stables. You will have your ride.

KUPIA, TURNS BACK DOWN THE HALL, BREAKS INTO A SKIPPING RUN. JOCASTA CONTINUES WALKING, STUDYING THE FEATHER'S MOTION.

*

HAEMON, WALKING DOWN THE HALL IN THE NORTH WING, STOPS BEFORE THE GUARDS AT OEDIPUS' DOOR. THE GUARDS SALUTE.

HAEMON: Return to your quarters.

2ND GUARD: Our orders...

HAEMON: All of you.

THEY HESITATE.

If you are questioned, I bear the responsibility.

THE GUARDS MOVE OFF.

*

HAEMON WATCHES THEM GO, THEN, ENTERS THE ROOM, SHUTS THE DOOR QUIETLY. OEDIPUS IS LYING ON THE COUCH -- ASLEEP. A TRAY OF FOOD IS BESIDE HIM ON A TABLE. HAEMON STANDS LOOKING AT OEDIPUS.

*

THE GUARDS ARGUE ON THE WAY TO THEIR QUARTERS:

2ND GUARD: We shouldn't have left.

POLYPHONTES: He'll lock you up as quickly as Creon.

3RD GUARD: TO POLYPHONTES.

You were a fool to come back.

*

THOUGH THERE ARE MANY SOLDIERS IN THE BARRACKS, IT IS FAIRLY QUIET. A GROUP OF SOLDIERS IS GATHERED AROUND CREON AS HE TALKS WITH ONE OF THE OFFICERS.

CREON: I suspect he's more than an ordinary traveler. It shouldn't be difficult to find out where he's from.

OFFICER: I'll do my best.

CREON STARTS TO LEAVE, THEN TURNS BACK TO THE OFFICER AND DRAWS HIM ASIDE.

CREON: I want a pyre built in the inner court. Use as few men as possible, trusted men.

THE OFFICER NODS. CREON LEAVES THE ROOM.

*

AS CREON COMES INTO THE CORRIDOR, THE THREE GUARDS FROM OEDIPUS' DOOR DUCK INTO A SIDE HALLWAY UNTIL CREON HAS PASSED. THEY GLANCE AT EACH OTHER, ASHAMED OF THEIR FEAR. THEN THEY ENTER THE SOLDIERS QUARTERS.

*

OFFICER: SEEING THE GUARDS

What's this?

2ND GUARD: Haemon's orders.

THE OFFICER STUDIES THEM, THEN SHRUGS AND TURNS AWAY.

*

IN OEDIPUS' ROOM, IT IS ALMOST DARK. HAEMON STANDS AT THE WINDOW THROUGH WHICH THE WALLS AND ANGLES OF THE PALACE TOWARD THE EAST CAN BE SEEN. HEAVY SHADOWS ARE CAST BY THE LATE AFTERNOON SUN.

HAEMON: SPEAKING SOFTLY

Oedipus...

OEDIPUS' EYES OPEN, BUT HE REMAINS STILL, ONE HAND UNDER A PILLOW -- HOLDING THE QUEEN'S DAGGER.

I wish I could let you sleep. Have you eaten? May I pour you some wine?

OEDIPUS SITS UP, BUT DOES NOT TAKE THE WINE. HIS HAND REMAINS UNDER THE PILLOW.

Will you come with me?

OEDIPUS GLANCES AT THE CLOSED DOOR.

They're gone.

OEDIPUS: Creon's order?

HAEMON: Mine.

HAEMON OPENS THE DOOR. SEEING A SERVANT DOWN THE HALL LIGHTING TORCHES, HE CALLS TO HIM.

Give us some light.

THE SERVANT ENTERS AND LIGHTS SEVERAL LAMPS.

OEDIPUS: Is it night?

HAEMON: The sun's not yet set. It's always dark in the palace.

THE SERVANT LEAVES, LEAVING THE DOOR OPEN.

OEDIPUS: It's cold as a tomb.

HAEMON: Take my cloak.

HAEMON TAKES OFF HIS CLOAK, OFFERS IT TO OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS MAKES NO MOVE TO TAKE IT.

Take it.

HAEMON STEPS TOWARD OEDIPUS TO PUT THE CLOAK

AROUND HIS SHOULDERS. OEDIPUS BRINGS THE DAGGER FROM UNDER THE PILLOW.

OEDIPUS: The Queen sent me a present.

HAEMON: I sent it to you.

OEDIPUS: Your generosity is overwhelming.

HAEMON: Your life is in danger.

OEDIPUS MOVES TOWARD THE OPEN DOOR.

You're free to leave if you want to.

OEDIPUS: Is that the Queen's wish?

HAEMON: The Queen has asked to see you. The Queen...

OEDIPUS: Yes?

HAEMON: ...offered her hand to whoever solved the riddle.

OEDIPUS: To me?

HAEMON: To you.

OEDIPUS: Would you prevent it?

HAEMON: I've come to persuade you.

OEDIPUS: WRPLY

Your arguments are not very persuasive.

HAEMON: Here.

HAEMON GIVES HIS OWN DAGGER TO OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS: The Theban legal system, impartial, unarguable, final.

HAEMON: Look at them.

OEDIPUS: I see they're identical -- writhing serpents.

HAEMON: It's the symbol of our House. Before Thebes was founded, a serpent lived in the land, killing, devouring. Cadmus slew it and scattered the teeth. The Sown Men, sprang up: Warriors. They killed each other -- all but five. We're their descendants -- born of soil, blood, death.

OEDIPUS: Sons of a monster.

HAEMON: Every man has blood in his veins, on his hands, his teeth -- and eagerly sheds it.

HAEMON POINTS TO OEDIPUS' DAGGER.

On that one the serpent wears a crown. Do you see it? It was to be a present for the Queen's son.

OEDIPUS: Her son?

HAEMON: I had them made for us. Rather, my father granted my wish to have them made. He was proud of his son. At six I asked for daggers, two golden daggers -- manly toys. We were going to be brothers. But the King killed his son -- my father helped him -- righteously, legally, I don't know how. I never saw the boy.

OEDIPUS: His own son?

HAEMON: With the blessings of the Gods.

OEDIPUS: Her son?

HAEMON: She and I used to play with those daggers. We'd kill the King and find the boy. But now the King is dead. Queen Jocasta longs to end the butchery in

this land.

OEDIPUS: Did you play at killing Creon?

HAEMON: He protected us from the King.

OEDIPUS: I'm not for hire as a murderer.

HAEMON: No, I didn't mean that.

OEDIPUS: If the crown were his, it would one day be yours.

HAEMON SHRUGS.

You don't want it? Why not?

HAEMON SAYS NOTHING. OEDIPUS WALKS TO THE WINDOW. BEYOND THE ANGLES OF THE BUILDING CAN BE SEEN A NARROW SECTION OF THE EAST COURTYARD, WHERE THE QUEEN IS RIDING. FROM TIME TO TIME SHE PASSES ACROSS THIS NARROW SPACE, IN AND OUT OF THE LIGHT.

Have you ever seen a dead man?

HAEMON: In battle.

OEDIPUS: Do you want your father dead?

HAEMON SHAKES HIS HEAD.

I don't want your crown.

HAEMON: Bring peace to Thebes.

OEDIPUS: I have not the means.

HAEMON: Jocasta.

OEDIPUS: Jocasta is a Goddess.

HAEMON: Together, you'll see... She waits for you. Come, I will take you to her.

OEDIPUS AND HAEMON LEAVE THE ROOM. JOCASTA PASSES IN THE DISTANCE.

*

TEIRESIAS, THE BOY AND KUPIA WALK TOWARD THE PALACE. THE PEOPLE STAND ASIDE RESPECTFULLY FOR TEIRESIAS. KUPIA KNOCKS AT A SMALL GATE. A GUARD LOOKS OUT. SHE SMILES, MAKES A SIGN, THE GUARD OPENS THE GATE.

*

TEIRESIAS, THE BOY AND KUPIA ENTER, GO THROUGH A TUNNEL-LIKE HALL AND OUT INTO THE EAST COURTYARD. JOCASTA RIDES VERY FAST ROUND AND ROUND THE BARE, ENCLOSED COURTYARD, PASSING AGAIN AND AGAIN THROUGH THE BEAMS OF FAILING SUNLIGHT. SEEING TEIRESIAS SHE REINS IN, CALLING HAPPILY.

JOCASTA: Teiresias, my wise Teiresias, I'm glad to see you.

THE GUARD HELPS HER DISMOUNT, AND STARTS TO LEAD THE HORSE AWAY.

Let Kupia ride.

THE GUARD ASSISTS KUPIA TO MOUNT THE QUEEN'S HORSE. KUPIA PERSUADES HIM TO SEAT THE BOY BEHIND HER. JOCASTA TO TEIRESIAS:

I'm sorry you were ill.

TEIRESIAS: Ill?

JOCASTA: Creon said you were ill?

TEIRESIAS: At times your brother arranges the truth.

JOCASTA: ACKNOWLEDGES HIS OBSERVATION WITH A QUIET LAUGH.

You must help me.

TAKING HIS ARM, SHE LEADS HIM TOWARD A SHELTERED BENCH.

*

HAEMON AND OEDIPUS WALK DOWN A DARK CORRIDOR TOWARD AN OPEN ARCHWAY. HAEMON CARRIES A TORCH.

OEDIPUS: Would he have let Acmon marry the Queen?

HAEMON: Conditionally. Acmon is a commoner. Creon could have had his children barred from the throne and himself declared heir.

OEDIPUS: Did Acmon agree to that?

HAEMON: He would have.

OEDIPUS: That would be signing his own death warrant.

HAEMON: GIVING OEDIPUS A SIGNIFICANT LOOK.

And if he antagonized Creon?

OEDIPUS: I see.

HAEMON: He might propose the same thing to you.

OEDIPUS LAUGHS.

Don't underestimate Creon.

HAVING REACHED THE OPEN ARCHWAY, **HAEMON SLIPS HIS TORCH INTO A HIGH WALL BRACKET. AS THE LIGHT STRIKES**

OEDIPUS, IT MAKES HIM LOOK HUGE, MENACING. HAEMON WHISPERS -- ALMOST IN AWE.

Who are you?

OEDIPUS: Oedipus, Prince Haemon. I have no father and no home.

HAEMON: Where are you from?

OEDIPUS: The desert. Where there is no comfort, but there is solitude, there is peace.

*

HAEMON AND OEDIPUS STEP FROM THE HALLWAY ONTO THE BALCONY AT A POINT OVERLOOKING THE FRONT COURTYARD. THE NOISY, QUARRELSOME CROWD IS NOW LARGER. REBELLION SIMMERS. THE LATE AFTERNOON SUN CASTS THE CROWD'S ELONGATED SHADOWS ACROSS THE COURTYARD.

HAEMON: They think you are a God. -- You don't have to marry the Queen. If you want the crown of Thebes, you can take it.

OEDIPUS REMAINS SILENT.

Just raise your hand.

AS OEDIPUS TAKES A STEP FORWARD, HAEMON'S QUICKLY RESTRAINS HIM.

OEDIPUS: You're a torn man, Haemon. Why didn't you answer the riddle?

HAEMON: I didn't try.

OEDIPUS: What if you had answered it?

HAEMON LETS HIS HAND DROP FROM OEDIPUS' ARM.

Do you love her very much?

THE NOISE AND SHOUTING OF THE CROWD INCREASES.

HAEMON: "Down with the House of Laius" -- can you hear them?

OEDIPUS: And she?

HAEMON: Come. She has asked for you.

*

IN THE COURTYARD, JOCASTA HAS FINISHED TELLING TEIRESIAS ABOUT OEDIPUS.

JOCASTA: I want to marry him. Will you give me your blessing?

TEIRESIAS: You have described a courageous young man, my child. Yet the omens... Could I have mistaken the omens? I give you my blessing. May you be happy, may you be fruitful.

JOCASTA: Come, good Teiresias, you must talk to him.

JOCASTA RISES, HELPS TEIRESIAS TO HIS FEET, AND SIGNALS TO KUPIA. THE GUARD HELPS KUPIA AND THE BOY DISMOUNT.

*

THROUGH THE FOLLOWING SCENE KUPIA AND THE BOY FOLLOW JOCASTA AND TEIRESIAS AS THEY WALK THROUGH THE GLOOMY HALLS TOWARD HER APARTMENT.

JOCASTA: Oedipus will be a good consort, a just king.

TEIRESIAS: Oedipus? Swollen foot? He who walks with pain.

JOCASTA: Yes, he limps. His foot was injured in an accident.

TEIRESIAS: A lame bird was caught today. There was no feed in him.

JOCASTA: Is that your omen, Teiresias?

TEIRESIAS: A man called foreigner will ignite chaos in this land, brother against brother, child against parent, parent against...

JOCASTA: Has Creon bribed you to say this?

TEIRESIAS: The Gods cannot be bribed.

JOCASTA: You have given me your blessing.

TEIRESIAS: Perhaps in haste, my child.

JOCASTA: Why do you back Creon and not me?

TEIRESIAS: I offer you my counsel. There are many men, wait for another.

JOCASTA: Will Creon ever wear the crown of Thebes?

TEIRESIAS: Many things will come to pass. Though they be what you would not wish, their cause will, perhaps, be very different.

JOCASTA: Was Laius' death part of a scheme? Tell me. I'm glad he's dead.

TEIRESIAS: Laius was killed far away where three ways meet.

JOCASTA: Who killed him?

TEIRESIAS: No one knows his murderer.

JOCASTA: It was not my child. Your Gods are often wrong.

TEIRESIAS: The prophesies of the Gods must be looked to and feared.

*

THEY ARE NOW WALKING ALONG THE BALCONY.

JOCASTA: Is Creon plotting to kill me, too?

TEIRESIAS: You look not where the danger is.

JOCASTA: I shall marry the hero. The people worship Oedipus.

TEIRESIAS: Worship is the prerogative of the Gods.

JOCASTA: His wisdom...

TEIRESIAS: Is the solving of riddles wisdom?

JOCASTA: A God can ask a riddle, but cannot or dare not or will not answer it. I saw your Sphinx.

**SHE HOLDS UP THE FEATHER, LAUGHING, TOUCHING
TEIRESIAS WITH IT.**

TEIRESIAS: You laugh at her body, Madame, but can you account for her spirit?

JOCASTA: What was her riddle?

TEIRESIAS: Ask the one who answered it.

**THERE IS A GREAT SHOUT FROM THE CROWD OUTSIDE THE
PALACE GATES.**

JOCASTA: Why didn't you answer the riddle?

TEIRESIAS: Why do you ask, Madame? The answer is known.

JOCASTA: You have the Gods beguiled, dancing in the palm of your hand. You and Creon.

TEIRESIAS: Madame knows her speech is blasphemous and false.

JOCASTA: I know the will of the Gods is strangely compatible with the corruption of men.

TEIRESIAS: Madame...!

JOCASTA: Don't think I can't see, Teiresias. You talk about inner visions, but I have eyes! God's will is Ares' anger -- always bloody. You called it mysterious. Well, I defy the Gods, I'll find my own way.

TEIRESIAS: Forbear! They will scourge you.

THEY ENTER JOCASTA'S APARTMENT.

*

JOCASTA: With what? Death? Sorrow? Have I known anything else?

TEIRESIAS: There will come a time in your house when the blind shall see.

JOCASTA: **OVERRIDING HIS WORDS, ALMOST SHOUTING.**

They will say: "During the reign of Jocasta and Oedipus, peace overcame the warriors of Thebes. Peace!"

TEIRESIAS: The Gods control our destiny.

JOCASTA: Perhaps, but right now, I do. For this while, there will be an end to violence in my land.

TEIRESIAS: Your children, and their children are doomed.

JOCASTA: They, too, must learn. Why? Knowledge is always for now. Just now. Why? That I don't know.

TEIRESIAS: Madame will one day see who is the fool and who is blind.

SHOUTING FROM THE CROWD BECOMES LOUDER, MORE BELLIGERENT. JOCASTA PLACES THE FEATHER FROM THE SPHINX ON THE TABLE NEXT TO THE ARROW KUPIA HAS GIVEN HER EARLIER. AS SHE MOVES TOWARD THE BALCONY,

SHE REALIZES THAT KUPIA AND THE BOY ARE NO LONGER FOLLOWING THEM.

JOCASTA: Where is Kupia?

TEIRESIAS TRIES TO FOLLOW JOCASTA. HE STUMBLES.

Where is Kupia?

*

IN A COURTYARD, ALONG THE NORTH WALL OF THE PALACE, ARE A SERIES OF STONE CAGES, SMALL, ROCK DUG ROOMS, WITH IRON GATED DOORWAYS. **KUPIA** AND THE BOY WALK PAST THEM, PEERING QUICKLY INTO EACH. **KUPIA** SPEAKS TO ONE OF THE GUARDS, WHO, AT THE MOMENT, IS POLISHING HIS SWORD AND DAGGER.

KUPIA: Captain Asterius...

CAPTAIN ASTERIUS LOOKS UP, ASTONISHED TO SEE KUPIA IN THE JAIL YARD.

Mother sends you her greetings.

ASTERIUS: Kupia! What are you doing here? You're not to be here. You can't be in here! You know that. Creon will...

KUPIA: LAUGHS PRETTILY

...put me in jail?

ASTERIUS: It's no light matter. These are difficult times. Creon needs all the cooperation he can get. to deal with...

KUPIA: The Sphinx is dead. The Queen asked me to speak to Lord Acmon.

ASTERIUS STUDIES HER, UNCERTAIN IF SHE IS TELLING THE TRUTH -- WHAT IT MEANS IF SHE IS.

Which cell is Lord Acmon in?

FINALLY, ASTERIUS SMILES. DECIDING TO INDULGE THE CHILD, HE CHUCKLES AND NODS TOWARD A CELL, SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS. KUPIA AND THE BOY MOVE QUICKLY TO THIS CELL. KUPIA, IN AN IMPERATIVE WHISPER:

Lord Acmon.

ACMON: Kupia?

KUPIA: Yes.

ACMON: Kupia?

KUPIA: Yes.

ACMON: SHOCKED, HE COMES TO THE CELL GATE, SPEAKS SOFTLY BUT FORCEFULLY.

Kupia, why? You mustn't be here. It's dangerous for you to come here.

KUPIA: WHISPERING

I'll speak to the Queen. She'll get you out of here.

ACMON: ADAMANTLY.

You must not!

KUPIA: You did nothing wrong.

ACMON: GENTLY, BUT UNQUESTIONABLY DISMISSING HER.

Thank you for your concern. It is kind, thoughtful. But, go now.

KUPIA: I'll speak to the Queen.

ACMON: Please do not. I appreciate your bravery, your goodness. But you must go now! Don't speak to anyone, don't say you were here.

THE BOY TUGS AT KUPIA, RELUCTANTLY SHE WALKS AWAY WITH HIM. TURNS BACK AND WHISPERS JUST LOUD ENOUGH FOR ACMON TO HEAR:

KUPIA: I did find the laurel leaves.

ACMON MANAGES TO SMILE, THEN TURNS AWAY. AS THEY LEAVE THE JAIL YARD, THE BOY SAYS.

BOY: He'll fall on his sword.

KUPIA: What do you mean?

BOY: Acmon is an honorable man.

KUPIA: But he won't do that! He mustn't do that! He can't do that!

SHE GRABS THE BOY'S HAND, RUNS BACK TO ASTERIUS.

ASTERIUS: What's this? You children can't be playing around in here. It's my mistake to let you talk to Lord Acmon in the first place.

KUPIA: You have to protect him! Protect him! The Queen is going to marry Oedipus! He'll be free in just a day or two.

ASTERIUS: Well, of course he's protected. How much more protected can you get than behind bars.

LIKE A KINDLY UNCLE, HE LAUGHS AT HIS OWN LITTLE JOKE.

BOY: But he has his sword?

ASTERIUS: Of course he has his sword, you don't deprive a Lord of his sword, just because he's in jail.

KUPIA: But you must!

ASTERIUS: O now, come now Kupia, you're a grown girl. You mustn't interfere with men's affairs. Everything will be fine.

KUPIA: And if it isn't?

ASTERIUS: Well! I'm responsible.

KUPIA: I'll be back!

KUPIA STARTS TO RUN AND THE BOY RUNS TO CATCH UP WITH HER. ASTERIUS ISN'T QUITE CERTAIN IF HE FEELS AMUSED OR THREATENED.

*

HAEMON AND OEDIPUS WALK ALONG THE BALCONY. BELOW THEM, ON THE PALACE PORCH, BEFORE THE GREAT DOORS, STANDS CREON. THE SHADOWS OF THE RESTLESS CROWD CAST BY THE SETTING SUN, REACH TO HIS FEET.

*

JOCASTA, IN HER RECEPTION ROOM, ALARMED AT NOT FINDING KUPIA, CALLS.

JOCASTA: Aphron! Aphron! Aphrodite!

JOCASTA RETURNS TO THE BALCONY. SENSING HER PRESENCE, TEIRESIAS AGAIN WARNS HER. THE NOISE OF THE CROWD INCREASES.

TEIRESIAS: Beware of the voice of man, it tempts you to destruction.

JOCASTA: BACKING AWAY FROM TEIRESIAS, SHE SHOUTS:

Stop it! Stop it!

TEIRESIAS: The Gods are angry!

JOCASTA: Leave me alone!

TEIRESIAS: Your fate is hounding you.

JOCASTA: Stop!

AS JOCASTA TURNS FROM HIM, SHE SEES HAEMON AND OEDIPUS COMING ALONG THE BALCONY. SHE RUNS THROUGH THE RECEPTION ROOM AND ON INTO HER BEDROOM.

TEIRESIAS: Woe to you...

HAEMON AND OEDIPUS APPROACH TEIRESIAS.

TEIRESIAS: ...and to Thebes, woe to the House of Laius. Oedipus will destroy this House.

HAEMON: Silence, old man! Silence! Where is your lad?

TEIRESIAS: Haemon? Is it Haemon?

HAEMON: You must go.

TEIRESIAS: If you love the Queen...

HAEMON: Silence! Stay here!

*

HAEMON LEADS OEDIPUS INTO JOCASTA'S RECEPTION ROOM, LEAVING TEIRESIAS ALONE ON THE BALCONY

OEDIPUS: Who is he?

HAEMON: Teiresias.

OEDIPUS: Why does he speak against me?

HAEMON: Wait here.

HAEMON LEAVES OEDIPUS ALONE IN THE RECEPTION ROOM.

*

HE ENTERS JOCASTA'S BEDROOM WHERE HE FINDS HER STANDING, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM, MOTIONLESS .

HAEMON: I have brought Oedipus.

THEIR EYES MEET. JOCASTA LOOKS DOWN. HAEMON STANDS, WANTING TO SAY SOMETHING MORE, THEN, AFTER A MOMENT, QUIETLY LEAVES.

*

RETURNING TO THE RECEPTION ROOM, HAEMON GENTLY CLOSES THE DOOR. OEDIPUS STANDS IN THE DOORWAY TO THE BALCONY.

HAEMON: The Queen will be here in a moment. Be gentle with her.

OEDIPUS: Who is the old man?

HAEMON: Teiresias is a seer.

OEDIPUS: Does she listen to him?

HAEMON: WITH SUDDEN ANGER.

What is your fear?!

OEDIPUS DOES NOT ANSWER.

*

HAEMON GOES OUT ONTO THE BALCONY SHUTTING THE DOORS, AND LEADS TEIRESIAS AWAY ALONG THE BALCONY.

*

OEDIPUS, ALONE, REMAINS MOTIONLESS FOR A TIME, THEN BEGINS TO EXAMINE THE ROOM, NERVOUS, CURIOUS. HE PICKS UP THE EMERALD CROWN, EXAMINES IT, LIFTS IT TO TRY IT ON. **JOCASTA**, IN THE BEDROOM DOORWAY, WATCHES **OEDIPUS**. HIS BACK IS TO HER. SHE SPEAKS SOFTLY, BUT DISTINCTLY, HER VOICE CALM.

JOCASTA: It's a beautiful crown, isn't it?

OEDIPUS, STARTLED, WHIRLS AROUND. HE LOOKS AT **JOCASTA**, LOOKS AT THE CROWN, SETS IT DOWN, KNEELS.

Rise, young Oedipus. Don't play the fool.

INDICATING THE CROWN

Bring it to me.

HE TAKES THE EMERALD CROWN TO HER, SHE HOLDS IT UP, TURNING IT ROUND AND ROUND TO SHOW IT OFF. LIGHT CATCHES IN AND REFLECTS FROM THE EMERALDS.

It is made of the gold and emeralds of our ancestress Europa. Jewels, so they say, given to her by Zeus -- in payment for rape. Originally a necklace -- around her throat. Put it on.

SHE EXTENDS THE CROWN TOWARD **OEDIPUS**. HE DOES NOT MOVE OR SPEAK.

Put it on. It carries no evil spell. The legend says that it confers irresistible beauty upon the one who wears it.

OEDIPUS: SMILING.

Is that a command?

HE TAKES THE CROWN AND PUTS IT ON, WHICH, OF COURSE, MAKES HIM LOOK RADIANTLY BEAUTIFUL. **JOCASTA** TURNS

AWAY.

I think you have captured all its power.

OEDIPUS TAKES THE CROWN FROM HIS HEAD AND DROPS IT ON A BENCH.

JOCASTA: How casually you discard the gift of a God. Are you so rich?

OEDIPUS: Yes. Who offered the Queen of Thebes to a riddle solver? You? Your brother? Nephew? -- The old Seer is adamantly against it, isn't he?

JOCASTA: Thebes needs a King.

OEDIPUS: Why? -- You're the Thebans' Queen.

IRONICALLY.

"She who must be obeyed." -- I don't need a kingdom.

JOCASTA: I'll abdicate and name you my heir.

OEDIPUS: If I wanted Thebes, I could have it.

HE GRABS THE AIR, MAKING A FIST.

JOCASTA: You are arrogant -- little tramp of the desert.

OEDIPUS: My birth is as good as yours.

JOCASTA: Indeed? Are you a king? King of what? King of riddles.

OEDIPUS: In my land, I am a Prince.

JOCASTA: Where is your land? -- Why did you leave it? -- Did they try to give you a crown?

OEDIPUS: I ran from it.

JOCASTA: From what?

OEDIPUS: DETERMINED TO END THE BANTERING, TO BE FORTHRIGHT :

Fear. -- Fear of a prophecy.

JOCASTA: Oh the Gods! The Gods are the excuse for every man's dilemma. I, too, receive prophecies. Teiresias says you bring me doom.

OEDIPUS: You don't believe him.

JOCASTA: He is a great seer, much respected in our land, a prophet.

OEDIPUS: He is wrong.

JOCASTA: How old are you?

OEDIPUS: Twenty, almost twenty.

JOCASTA: Though a Queen -- do you want to marry a woman almost old enough to be your mother?

OEDIPUS IS SILENCED. AS JOCASTA BEGINS TO LAUGH, HE BECOMES ANGRY

OEDIPUS: Don't ever say that!

JOCASTA: Oh Gods, how funny!

OEDIPUS: Stop it!

HE GRABS HER IN A ROUGH, ALMOST BRUTAL, EMBRACE, KISSES HER UNTIL SHE STOPS LAUGHING, UNTIL SHE RESPONDS. WHEN HE RELEASES HER:

I don't want your crown, Jocasta, I want...

JOCASTA: Can I believe you?

OEDIPUS: ...you ...your love.

OEDIPUS KISSES JOCASTA AGAIN -- TENDERLY. AS SHE TRIES TO REGAIN HER COMPOSURE, SHE MOVES AWAY, DISTANCING HERSELF FROM HIM AND HER INCREASING ATTRACTION.

JOCASTA: I have been a Queen -- Queen of Thebes, for twenty-two years, like Nefertiti, beautiful Nefertiti...

OEDIPUS: "Beauty forever and ever."

JOCASTA: ...who, a thousand years ago, was Queen of Thebes -- in Egypt. Akhnaton's Queen. Together they built a new city on new land. They fostered new beliefs. They lived in peace.

OEDIPUS: I have read their story.

JOCASTA: You read.

OEDIPUS: Yes.

JOCASTA: Some say Cadmus, our ancestor, might have carried Nefertiti's blood -- our blood, mine -- from the East to Thebes, from ancient Thebes to our Thebes. Cadmus brought Phoenician writing from Tyre -- an alphabet, letters, far easier to read than hieroglyphics. In less than a century it has changed life forever. Here in Thebes, I am Queen -- but I have never ruled. I once sat beside my husband, now I sit beside my brother -- powerless -- and do nothing. But I do read and understand and record. Some say, when Nefertiti's husband/brother died, she became Pharaoh -- the Pharaoh Neferneferuaten.

OEDIPUS: And...?

JOCASTA: And after that? -- she was lost to history.

*

IN THE NOISY BARRACKS, THE SOLDIERS STAND ABOUT IN A DISORDERLY

CROWD. TO ONE SIDE, AN OFFICER TURNS AWAY FROM CREON TO BAWL AN ORDER:

OFFICER: Quiet! you men! I want every one of you armed and ready.

HAEMON TURNS CREON TO FACE HIM.

HAEMON: Father, you can't send armed men out there!

CREON: I want the court cleared.

HAEMON: You're ordering a massacre. -- Let me talk to them. I'll persuade them to go peacefully. -- They're fifty to one against the soldiers. -- You might not win. Let me try.

CREON: As you wish.

HAEMON EXITS. CREON SPEAKS TO THE OFFICER BEFORE HE, TOO, EXITS.

Keep the men ready. Wait for my order.

OFFICER: All right, you men, relax. Breathe easy.

NOISY CONVERSATION STARTS UP AGAIN. A SEATED GROUP THAT INCLUDES THE GUARDS FROM OEDIPUS' ROOM, HAVE OVERHEARD THE WORDS BETWEEN CREON AND HAEMON.

1st SOLDIER: Going to sweet talk them, is he?

POLYPHONTES: Haemon's right.

2nd SOLDIER: Well, it's fight now or long live King Oedipus

3rd SOLDIER: He might be a good King.

4th SOLDIER: Shhhhh... You want to get...?

HE DRAWS HIS FINGER ACROSS HIS THROAT.

2ND GUARD: Who is he?

3rd SOLDIER: Oedipus?

POLYPHONTES: You would sell your brother, wouldn't you?

2ND GUARD: You're pretty friendly with him. What'd you talk about in there? -- You know him.

POLYPHONTES: I don't know what you mean.

THE 2ND GUARD BEGINS TO BACK AWAY

YOUNG SOLDIER: Do you know him?

POLYPHONTES: He's a riddle solver.

POLYPHONTES NOTICES THE 2ND GUARD JUST GOING OUT THE DOOR. HE STANDS UP, LOOKS AROUND, APPREHENSION GROWING IN HIM. HE LEAVES THE ROOM. THE 2ND GUARD IS FAR DOWN ONE HALL. **POLYPHONTES** HURRIES OFF IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION.

*

IN CONTRAST TO THE GOOD-NATURED NOISE OF THE BARRACKS ROOMS, THE CROWD'S NOISE AT THE GATES IS NOW HOSTILE, VERGING ON VIOLENCE. THE SUN HAS SET. **HAEMON** STANDS AT THE TOP OF THE GREAT STAIRWAY. HE CALLS TO A GUARD:

HAEMON: Get some light. They can't see me.

GUARD: They can see well enough. They want to fight.

HAEMON: Get light!

THE GUARD GOES INTO THE PALACE.

*

APHRON HURRIES KUPIA ALONG A HALL, REPRIMANDING HER FOR HAVING GONE TO SEE ACMON.

APHRON: You cannot help. Things will happen as they happen.

KUPIA: That's not the truth, Mother. Acmon will fall on his sword.

APHRON: It can't be helped!

KUPIA: It can be helped. I must tell the Queen!

APHRON: You'll do no such thing. Creon is a treacherous man. If you cross him you have no idea what he might do.

KUPIA: I can't live in fear of an old man!

APHRON: An old man? Kupia, he's...

KUPIA: O Mother, our perspectives are so different.

APHRON: Nonetheless, you're not to disturb the Queen. She is with Oedipus.

BOTH SEE CREON COMING TOWARD THEM ALONG THE CORRIDOR. KUPIA DARTS AWAY IN THE DIRECTION OF THE QUEEN'S QUARTERS. APHRON STANDS HER GROUND.

CREON: Aphrodite! We meet so seldom anymore. Pity that little Kupia is so fleet-footed.

APHRON: She's wise for her age.

CREON: Now, Aphron!

APHRON: Don't you dare touch me.

CREON: I miss you. When this chaos calms down, you must let me take Kupia

hunting. There is much I could teach her.

APHRON: She has instructors enough. -- Though she misses Lord Acmon. How long are you going to keep him in jail?

CREON: He's a dead man.

APHRON: I can't believe that -- even of you.

CREON: Rumors can be hard to stifle.

APHRON: Surely he's harmless -- after the Queen marries Oedipus...

CREON: But, the Queen may not marry Oedipus. Have you considered that? Sweet Aphrodite, Goddess of Love.

That one may also be a dead man.

APHRON: When did you murder your own heart? -- adopt cruelty as a God?

CREON: Cruelty comes from a broken heart. It's in the blood. Sown Men's blood.

HE QUICKLY KISSES HER ON THE CHEEK.

I miss you.

AND HURRIES ON DOWN THE HALL

*

IN THE MURKY TWILIGHT OF THE INNER COURT WHERE THE SPHINX'S BODY LIES, TWO SOLDIERS STAND HOLDING TORCHES. THREE OTHER SOLDIERS ARE IN THE COURTYARD. TWO OF THEM SITTING ON LOGS AT THE EDGE OF THE FUNERAL PYRE. THE 3RD IS A YOUNGER SOLDIER. NO ONE TALKS.

CREON ENTERS. THE GUARD CLOSES THE DOOR AFTER HIM.

CREON: Is everything ready?

THE 1ST SOLDIER NODS.

No one has seen the body?

2ND SOLDIER SHAKES HIS HEAD.

3RD SOLDIER: The Queen, Sir.

CREON: The Queen? When?

3RD SOLDIER: Some time ago.

CREON SIGNALS FOR THE SPHINX'S BODY TO BE PLACED ON THE PYRE. TWO SOLDIERS LIFT BACK THE CLOTH.

CREON: Wait.

CREON TAKES A LONG LOOK AT THE DEAD SPHINX. PERHAPS HE SENSES HIS OWN DOWNFALL. THE FACE OF THE YOUNG 3RD SOLDIER, SLIGHTLY RESEMBLING OEDIPUS, SUDDENLY APPEARS NEXT TO CREON.

3RD SOLDIER: RESPECTFULLY AND FILLED WITH AWE.

Dare you burn her, my Lord?

STARTLED, **CREON LOOKS AT HIM -- A MOMENT OF FEAR, THEN IRRITATION.**

CREON: Nonsense!

HE SIGNALS FOR THE BODY TO BE PLACED ON THE PYRE.

THE SOLDIERS LIFT THE STRETCHER AND DUMP THE SPHINX UNCEREMONIOUSLY ONTO THE PYRE.

2ND SOLDIER: Should we send for Teiresias?

CREON: Be still! Light it!

THE SOLDIERS TOUCH THEIR TORCHES TO THE PYRE. THE FIRE IS SLOW TO START.

Fan the flames!

TO THE YOUNG 3RD SOLDIER.

You there, you help.

FROM THE YOUNG SOLDIER'S POV, THE SPHINX, WITH THE FLAMES CREEPING NEAR ITS HOLLOW-EYED HEAD, LOOKS TERRIFYING.

WHEN THE YOUNG SOLDIER DOES NOT MOVE, ANGRILY, CREON STARTS TOWARD HIM. THE COURTYARD DOOR OPENS. CREON TURNS TO SEE WHO IT IS. THE GUARD CROSSES THE COURTYARD TO CREON.

GUARD: One of the Palace Guards wants to talk to you.

CREON: Not now!

GUARD: About the Hero.

CREON LEAVES WITH THE GUARD. THE FIRE IGNITES THE BODY OF THE SPHINX. FOR A MOMENT IT FLARES UP ILLUMINATING THE COURTYARD.

*

IN THE HALLWAY THE 2ND GUARD STANDS AT ATTENTION. CREON AND THE GUARD ENTER FROM THE COURTYARD. THE GUARD CLOSES THE DOOR.

CREON: Yes.

2ND GUARD: Prince Creon.

CREON: What is it?

2ND GUARD: I know the man you're looking for.

CREON: Looking for?

2ND GUARD: He has information... about...

CREON TAKES THE 2ND GUARD'S ARM AND WALKS HIM A FEW STEPS DOWN THE HALL.

CREON: Who is it?

THE 2ND GUARD SMILES INGRATIATINGLY.

You'll get your reward.

2ND GUARD: Do you know Polyphontes?

CREON: SURPRISED.

Polyphontes? Why didn't he come?

2ND GUARD: He seems to have fallen under the spell of our savior.

THEY START DOWN THE HALL TOWARD THE BARRACKS.

*

A SERVANT LIGHTS THE TALL METAL CANDELABRA WHICH FLANK THE BALCONY DOORS IN JOCASTA'S RECEPTION ROOM. THE DOORS ARE CLOSED, THE CURTAINS DRAWN, BUT THE CROWD'S SHOUTING CAN STILL BE HEARD. JOCASTA SITS IN A CHAIR. OEDIPUS SITS ON THE FLOOR BESIDE HER, A STEMMED METAL WINE GOBLET NEAR HIS HAND. NEARBY, A CAT SITS ON A CHEST. WE HEAR ITS PURRING. THE SERVANT FINISHES HIS WORK AND LEAVES. THE CANDLELIT ROOM IS SERENE AND PEACEFUL. OEDIPUS DRINKS FROM THE GOBLET AND

HANDS IT TO JOCASTA. SHE TAKES A SIP AND GIVES IT BACK TO HIM. HE SETS IT ON THE FLOOR. THEIR CONVERSATION IS SLOW, DREAMLIKE.

OEDIPUS: Did Creon invent the Sphinx?

JOCASTA: He used it.

OEDIPUS: What was she?

JOCASTA: You solved the riddle.

OEDIPUS: She was very far away, very high up. Like a comet crossing the sky.

JOCASTA: I saw her body.

OEDIPUS: You saw it? I'm glad. At times, I think I imagined it. The heat... the moon in the sky... She was at the center, the very center, between the moon and the sun, poised... I'm glad you saw her.

JOCASTA: What was the riddle?

OEDIPUS: What creature...

JOCASTA REPEATS EACH OF OEDIPUS' PHRASES AS IN A LITANY OR -- LIKE MARRIAGE VOWS. LOOKING DOWN INTO HIS DARK EYES, SHE SEES HER OWN REFLECTION.

JOCASTA: What creature...

OEDIPUS: ...in one life...

JOCASTA: ...in this life...

OEDIPUS: ...crawls on four feet...

JOCASTA: ...crawls on four feet...

OEDIPUS: ...in the morning,

JOCASTA: ...in the morning,

UNSEEN BY EITHER JOCASTA OR OEDIPUS, KUPIA OPENS THE DOOR FROM THE AUDIENCE ROOM VERY SLIGHTLY. SHE WATCHES FOR A LITTLE WHILE, THEN WITHDRAWS.

OEDIPUS: ...walks on two...

JOCASTA: ...on two...

OEDIPUS: ...at noon,

JOCASTA: ...at noon,

OEDIPUS: ...and three...

JOCASTA: ...and three...

OEDIPUS: ...in the evening?

JOCASTA: ...toward evening?

OEDIPUS: And the answer...

JOCASTA: The answer is “man.”

THE WORD “Man,” SEEMS, AT THIS POINT, LIKE A REVELATION.

SUDDENLY THERE’S A LOUD BANGING ON THE DOOR. STARTLED FROM THEIR INTIMACY, BOTH JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS, JUMP UP. IN DOING SO, JOCASTA KNOCKS OVER THE WINE GOBLET. WINE SPILLS ON THE FLOOR AND STAINS THE HEM OF HER DRESS.

THE DOOR, BETWEEN THE AUDIENCE AND RECEPTION ROOM, IS THROWN OPEN. POLYPHONTES BURSTS IN, STOPS, DISORIENTED, DISTRAUGHT, THEN KNEELS.

POLYPHONTES: My Queen, forgive me.

JOCASTA: What is it?

POLYPHONTES: Oedipus...

OEDIPUS STARES DEFIANTLY AT POLYPHONTES.

JOCASTA: Well?

POLYPHONTES: I must tell you.

OEDIPUS MOVES BEHIND POLYPHONTES, CLOSES THE DOOR.

JOCASTA: Tell me. Get up.

POLYPHONTES RISES. HE LOOKS AT JOCASTA, THEN AT OEDIPUS, STANDING BEHIND HIM TO ONE SIDE.

POLYPHONTES: BOWS HIS HEAD

Oedipus... killed... a man.

JOCASTA: What are you saying?

POLYPHONTES: He killed...

JOCASTA: **TO OEDIPUS**

Is this true?

POLYPHONTES: If Creon finds out...

JOCASTA: Creon?

TO POLYPHONTES:

Who was it?

POLYPHONTES DOESN'T ANSWER. TO OEDIPUS:

Who was it?

OEDIPUS: I don't know.

POLYPHONTES: Your Majesty...

JOCASTA: You killed a man?

OEDIPUS: It was an accident.

I tried to... It was a pitiful accident.

JOCASTA: Tell me how it happened.

OEDIPUS: In my traveling...

JOCASTA: Is this why you left your home?

OEDIPUS: Afterward. A long time after. I was alone, walking along a road. I always traveled alone...

WATCHING JOCASTA INTENTLY

...and unarmed.

OEDIPUS, RECALLING THE PAINFUL MEMORY, SPEAKS SLOWLY AS HE CONFRONTS THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS OWN GUILT.

In the mountains where three roads meet. There was a man in a carriage, and... and...

JOCASTA: Polyphontes?

OEDIPUS: Yes. I was coming from Delphi, from the Oracle. I didn't know where I was, I asked directions. He...

INDICATING POLYPHONTES

... struck me with a sword. I don't think he meant to kill me. The old man in the carriage ordered him to strike. The old man kept shouting...

POLYPHONTES: "Make way for your betters."

OEDIPUS: "I know no betters than my sire and the Gods." -- I fought with this man and knocked him down. I think he was unconscious.

POLYPHONTES' FACE REMAINS IMPASSIVE.

I thought I might have hurt him. The old man attacked me from behind. I turned. He struck me. I pushed him back. He fell. His feet entangled in the horses' reins. The horses were frightened. He fell.

He fell... They started up... ran. I tried to stop the horses. They dragged him down the road... over the stones. When they stopped -- he was dead.

HIS VOICE HAS BECOME INAUDIBLE. THERE IS A LONG PAUSE.

TO POLYPHONTES:

Who was he?

JOCASTA: **QUICKLY, TOUCHING OEDIPUS.**

It was an accident.

TO POLYPHONTES.

It was an accident. Only the Gods are responsible for such an accident.

BEHIND POLYPHONTES, THE DOOR IS FLUNG OPEN. IN THE DOORWAY STANDS CREON, THE 2ND GUARD, AN OFFICER AND FIVE SOLDIERS. BEHIND THEM, THREE NOBLES, INCLUDING LORD DYMAS.

CREON: **TO SOLDIERS, INDICATING POLYPHONTES.**

Seize him!

OEDIPUS: STEPPING IN FRONT OF POLYPHONTES.

You're not to touch this man.

THE SOLDIERS STOP, STARTLED.

CREON: Both of them.

THE SOLDIERS STILL HESITATE. OEDIPUS STARES LEVELLY AT CREON. HE WAITS A MOMENT SO THAT THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE SOLDIERS' HESITATION CAN BE FELT. THEN, STILL LOOKING DIRECTLY AT CREON, SAYS CALMLY:

OEDIPUS: Arrest Prince Creon.

THERE IS ABSOLUTE SILENCE. **OEDIPUS REPEATS VERY SOFTLY.**

Arrest the Prince.

AFTER A BRIEF PAUSE, **JOCASTA NODS WITH QUIET AUTHORITY:**

JOCASTA: Obey the King.

STILL NO ONE MOVES. **CREON DRAWS HIS SWORD. LORD DYMAS WRENCHES IT FROM HIS HAND. CREON TURNS. THE SOLDIERS MOVE TO LAY HANDS ON HIM. HE BREAKS FREE AND ATTACKS OEDIPUS.** A QUIET, INTENSE AND BRUTAL FIGHT FOLLOWS. THE OTHERS STAND STILL, SILENT, WATCHING. THE TWO MEN ARE EVENLY MATCHED. **CREON, THOUGH LARGER AND STRONGER, IS IN HIS FORTIES; OEDIPUS IS YOUNGER, LIGHTER, QUICKER.** EVEN SO, AT THE MOMENT **HAEMON ENTERS, OEDIPUS IS BEING OVERCOME.**

AS **HAEMON RUSHES IN FROM THE BALCONY, THE NOISE OF THE CROWD, LOUD AND THREATENING, INVADES THE ROOM.**

HAEMON: The gates are breaking!

HAEMON'S WORDS AND THE CROWD NOISE DISTRACT CREON.
HE SHOUTS TO THE OFFICER.

CREON: Call the Guards! For Thebes's sake -- call out the Guards!

THE OFFICER AND SEVERAL OF THE SOLDIERS, EXIT RUNNING. OEDIPUS NEITHER SEES HAEMON NOR HEARS THE CROWD. HE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF CREON'S DISTRACTION TO GIVE HIM A SAVAGE BLOW. CREON SLIPS, ON THE SPILLED WINE, AND FALLS TO HIS KNEES. OEDIPUS GRABS THE STRONG WOOD, METAL TIPPED ARROW FROM THE TABLE. THE SPHINX'S FEATHER FLUTTERS TO THE FLOOR. OEDIPUS HOLDS CREON WITH ONE HAND AND LASHES HIM BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE FACE WITH THE ARROW. CREON TRIES TO PROTECT HIS FACE. THE ARROW TIP CUTS INTO HIS HANDS.

OEDIPUS IS "INSANE" WITH RAGE. AND, ALTHOUGH CREON IS QUITE HELPLESS, OEDIPUS GOES ON AND ON BEATING HIM. HORROR BEGINS TO SHOW ON THE FACES OF THE PEOPLE WATCHING. THOUGH MOST SYMPATHIZE WITH OEDIPUS, THE BRUTALITY OF THE BEATING IS NOT QUITE HUMAN. HAEMON TRIES TO PULL OEDIPUS AWAY FROM HIS FATHER.

HAEMON: Oedipus! By the Gods! Oedipus!

BEYOND KNOWING WHAT HE IS DOING, OEDIPUS STRUGGLES WITH HAEMON, THEN AGAIN ATTACKS CREON. SUDDENLY, JOCASTA STEPS FORWARD.

JOCASTA: Oedipus! Stop! Stop, you'll kill him!

SHE GIVES OEDIPUS A HARD, SHARP SLAP ACROSS THE FACE.

OEDIPUS: It's what you want!

JOCASTA: No! No, no.

OEDIPUS, HIS HYSTERIA SPENT, ALL BUT COLLAPSES. HAEMON AND JOCASTA HELP HIM TO SIT ON A CHAIR. CREON IS TWISTED ROUND IN PAIN, HIS HEAD BOWED TO THE FLOOR, HIS HANDS TO HIS FACE, BLOOD COMING FROM THE CUTS. TWO SOLDIERS STEP FORWARD TO LIFT HIM. HAEMON GESTURES THEM AWAY,

AND KNEELS BESIDE CREON.

HAEMON: Father?

HAEMON, MOVED BY THE PLIGHT OF HIS FATHER REACHES TO HELP HIM. CREON THROWS OFF HAEMON'S HANDS, GETS TO HIS FEET.

CREON: SNARLS AT OEDIPUS:

Yamosu Ton Theon -- Your blind fury will kill you.

THE ALARM BELL BEGINS TO TOLL, CALLING OUT THE SOLDIERS.

JOCASTA: LOOKS AT CREON, THEIR EYES LOCK. JOCASTA FINALLY FREE OF CREON'S ENSORCELMEN, SAYS TO HAEMON:

Take him to prison.

HAEMON TURNS TO LOOK AT HER BESEECHINGLY.

And get him a physician.

HAEMON, CREON, THE SOLDIERS, AND THE NOBLES EXIT VIA THE BALCONY. POLYPHONTES, HESITANTLY, STARTS TO FOLLOW.

Polyphontes.

POLYPHONTES REMAINS.

**End of JOCASTA, PART II,
of a three part TELEVISION SERIES**

JOCASTA

PART III

SOLDIERS POUR INTO THE COURTYARD. THE TOWNSPEOPLE SUCCEED IN OPENING THE GATES, BUT ARE HELD IN CHECK BY THE CLOSED RANKS OF THE SOLDIERS.

CREON: **CREON SHOUTS FROM THE BALCONY:**

The Temple Gate! Guard the Temple Gate!

HAEMON NODS TO A SOLDIER, WHO HURRIES OFF TO GIVE THE ORDER. (THIS, CREON'S LAST COMMAND, SAVES THEBES FROM THIS IMMINENTLY DISASTROUS CONFLICT.) THE CROWD IS GRADUALLY SUBDUED. THE GATES ARE RE-CLOSED. HAEMON WATCHES HIS FATHER CLOSELY. WHEN A CERTAIN MEASURE OF ORDER IS RESTORED, HE SIGNALS FOR THE SOLDIERS TO TAKE CREON AWAY. THE NOBLES REMAIN WITH HAEMON.

A SEMBLANCE OF ORDER IS RESTORED, HAEMON RAISES HIS ARMS AND SHOUTS:

HAEMON: People of Thebes! People of Thebes. Listen! Listen! People of Thebes, listen, we have won a great victory today....

*

KUPIA DASHES FROM HER HIDING PLACE IN JOCASTA'S AUDIENCE ROOM INTO THE HALLWAY, RUNNING AS FAST AS SHE CAN.

*

IN THE RECEPTION ROOM, HAEMON'S VOICE AND THE CROWD'S NOISE ARE HEARD FAINTLY. JOCASTA SITS BESIDE OEDIPUS. POLYPHONTES BRINGS HER A BASIN OF WATER. SHE KNEELS AND WIPES OEDIPUS' FACE WITH A CLOTH DIPPED IN THE WATER.

OEDIPUS: Is he dead? Is he...?

JOCASTA SHAKES HER HEAD GENTLY.

I didn't kill him. I swear it.

JOCASTA: No, my love.

OEDIPUS: I hate him.

JOCASTA: Creon will be all right.

OEDIPUS: Creon?

OEDIPUS, AGAIN ALMOST FAINTING, SLUMPS AGAINST
JOCASTA.

JOCASTA: TO **POLYPHONTES**:

Help me.

TOGETHER, HALF CARRYING HIM, THEY WALK OEDIPUS INTO THE BEDROOM.

*

THEY HELP HIM TO LIE DOWN ON JOCASTA'S BED. AS JOCASTA TAKES OFF HIS SANDALS, SHE NOTES THE SCARS ON HIS ANKLES. SHE COVERS HIM AND STANDS WATCHING. POLYPHONTES LEAVES THE ROOM. OEDIPUS' EYES ARE CLOSED. JOCASTA BENDS OVER HIM, KISSES HIS FOREHEAD. HE OPENS HIS EYES FOR A MOMENT, SMILES A LITTLE, THEN FALLS ASLEEP.

*

JOCASTA RETURNS TO THE RECEPTION ROOM, LEAVING THE DOOR TO THE BEDROOM OPEN. SHE WALKS PAST POLYPHONTES, OPENS THE BALCONY DOORS. THE CROWD IS NOW LIT BY TORCHES, SOME ENSCONCED ON THE FACADE OF THE PALACE, SOME IN THE HANDS OF THE SOLDIERS, OTHERS DOTTED HERE AND THERE AMONG THE PEOPLE. THE CROWD, WHICH IS QUIET NOW, DOES NOT SEE JOCASTA. HAEMON'S VOICE CAN BE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE. JOCASTA STANDS FOR A LONG TIME, LISTENING, LOOKING AT THE CITY. SHE DOES NOT TURN AS SHE SPEAKS QUIETLY TO POLYPHONTES.

JOCASTA: It was Laius. At Phocis.

POLYPHONTES: Yes, my Queen.

JOCASTA: Before, you told a different story of his death.

POLYPHONTES: I was afraid.

JOCASTA: You said bandits attacked you. Five? Six?

POLYPHONTES: I was afraid to say the King was killed by a boy.

JOCASTA: Killed?

SHE WAITS, BUT POLYPHONTES DOES NOT REPLY. SHE COMES IN FROM THE BALCONY.

Polyphontes, what was Laius like?

POLYPHONTES: He was the King.

JOCASTA: But what did you think of him? You served him for many years. Was he kind to you?

POLYPHONTES DOES NOT LOOK AT HER.

I have seen him beat you. He was a tyrant, a murderer setting himself up as judge -- God of Thebes. His warrior culture brought us to the edge of extinction. Laius did not give the people food to eat or useful work to do. He gave them wars. Polyphontes -- you know the word: "Glory!" He killed my child, many people's children. He saw himself as a God of Glory! I know no man who more closely resembled the Gods.

Was he a good man, Polyphontes? Answer me.

SLOWLY POLYPHONTES SHAKES HIS HEAD. SHE TURNS AWAY.

Creon is like him.

POLYPHONTES LOOKS THOUGHTFULLY TOWARD THE OPEN DOOR OF THE BEDROOM. JOCASTA TURNS, NOTICES THE DIRECTION OF HIS GAZE.

Oedipus has a good heart., better than Laius, better than Creon, perhaps he'll be a good king.

POLYPHONTES, STUDIES JOCASTA FOR A LONG MOMENT. THEN HE BOWS HIS HEAD.

He's very young, I'll train him for his position, he can learn, he can change.

POLYPHONTES: Yes, my Queen

JOCASTA: REACTING TO THE SLIGHT NOTE OF DOUBT IN HIS VOICE.

We have to believe that we can change.

POLYPHONTES: Yes, my Queen.

JOCASTA: Does anyone else know the story of Laius' death?

POLYPHONTES: No, my Queen.

JOCASTA: Will *you* keep silent?

POLYPHONTES: If you wish, my Queen. If that is your command.

JOCASTA: AT THE BEDROOM DOOR, SHE SEES OEDIPUS IS ASLEEP. SHE TURNS BACK TO POLYPHONTES.

I would not choose to build my world on death, deception. But perhaps there is no choice. Perhaps we can only agree -- to the birth of peace, of love from death -- of truth from deception.

POLYPHONTES: I will be silent.

HAEMON ENTERS AT THE BALCONY DOORS.

HAEMON: Jocasta!

JOCASTA: There's blood on your face.

HAEMON: HE WIPES HIS FACE.

I have announced your marriage. The people are calmed, but they will not disperse. You must come and confirm the announcement. And Oedipus...

JOCASTA: He's asleep.

TO POLYPHONTES:

Stay, look after him.

*

JOCASTA AND HAEMON EXIT THROUGH THE BALCONY DOORS AND WALK ALONG THE BALCONY.

How is Creon?

HAEMON: I will go down and visit him

ANGUISHED.

Why did he keep beating him?

JOCASTA: I don't think he knew what he was doing.

HAEMON: Jocasta...

BUT HE SAYS NO MORE. THEY WALK ON IN SILENCE. JOCASTA TAKES HIS HAND.

JOCASTA: My dearest friend.

THEY STOP. SHE RAISES HIS HAND TO HER LIPS AND KISSES IT.

My only companion. I love him, Haemon.

JOCASTA SEARCHES HIS FACE FOR UNDERSTANDING. HAEMON BOWS HIS HEAD.

I can be a good, a merciful Queen. I've never had the chance before. I have lain awake for twenty years dreaming of what it could have been like to educate my king. In doing so, I have trained myself. Oedipus has strength and youth. He speaks of our land with love, with hope. He loves me.

THEY WALK ON, JOCASTA STILL HOLDING HAEMON'S HAND.

He loves me.

*

KUPIA HURRIES ALONG THE CELLS IN THE PRISON YARD UNTIL SHE COMES TO ACMON'S. THROUGH THE BARS, SHE CALLS IN AN EXCITED WHISPER.

KUPIA: Acmon! Acmon! Lord Acmon! Creon is... in prison.

ACMON IS LYING ON THE GROUND IN A POOL OF BLOOD, A SWORD THROUGH HIS HEART. THIS IS KUPIA'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH FATE'S TREACHERY. SHE LINGERS WITH HER HANDS CLUTCHING THE BARS.

*

ON THE BALCONY, AT THE FRONT OF THE PALACE, THE NOBLES ARE GATHERED. JOCASTA AND THE NOBLES GREET EACH OTHER IN RESPECTFUL SILENCE. JOCASTA AND HAEMON STEP TO THE BALUSTRADE. AS SOON AS THEY SEE JOCASTA, A SHOUT GOES UP FROM THE CROWD. SHE HOLD HER HANDS UP FOR SILENCE. WHEN IT IS SILENT, SHE BEGINS TO SPEAK.

JOCASTA: People of Thebes. People of Thebes. My people. Haemon has told you, and I have come to confirm it. I shall be married...

A GREAT SHOUT AND CHEERING FROM THE CROWD.

...tomorrow!

CHEERING

To our Hero. Oedipus!

CHEERING

He will share my throne and be your King.

CHEERING

Thebes will prosper again in peace!

CHEERING

Discard your garments of grief, of mourning. Rejoice!

CHEERING

Come to my wedding -- tomorrow...

CHEERING

...when the sun is high! We shall celebrate!

THE CROWD CHEERS ON AND ON. WE HEAR INDIVIDUAL VOICES IN THE CROWD SHOUTING:

Long live the Queen! / Long live King Oedipus!/Long live Queen Jocasta!
Long live the hero, King Oedipus! etc.

THE JOYOUS PEOPLE EMBRACE, DANCE, CRY, SING.

*

AS THEY STEP BACK FROM THE BALUSTRADE, JOCASTA TURNS TO HAEMON.

JOCASTA: Will you see to the preparations. There must be a feast, a great, great wedding feast for all the city. Find enough, find it someplace. Tomorrow the gates will be unlocked, they will never be locked again.

HAEMON: As you wish, my Queen.

HIS ANSWER IS MORE FORMAL THAN JOCASTA HAD EXPECTED. SHE HOLDS OUT HER HAND TO HIM. HE TAKES IT, KNEELS. SHE IS AGAIN SURPRISED. THE NOBLES KNEEL. THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENCE IN WHICH SHE REALIZES AND ACKNOWLEDGES THIS NEW RESPECT.

JOCASTA: Please rise.

JOCASTA TURNS TOWARD THE THRONE ROOM. DYMAS OPENS THE DOORS FOR HER, THEN KNEELS. SILENTLY, SHE GIVES HIM

HER HAND. SHE ENTERS THE THRONE ROOM. HAEMON DOES NOT RISE UNTIL JOCASTA HAS LEFT THE BALCONY.

*

JOCASTA CROSSES THE DARK, SILENT ROOM. THE ONLY LIGHT COMES FROM THE FLICKERING TORCHES OUTSIDE. AT THE GREAT DOORS INTO THE HALL, SHE TURNS, AND GAZES FOR A LONG MOMENT AT THE DOUBLE THRONE OF THEBES. THEN SHE OPENS THE DOOR.

*

IN THE HALL. SHE WALKS SLOWLY FOR AWHILE, HER HEAD BOWED, THINKING. WHEN SHE RAISES HER HEAD, HER FACE IS UNTROUBLED, SHE SMILES. SHE QUICKENS HER PACE UNTIL SHE IS ALMOST RUNNING.

*

OEDIPUS LIES IN JOCASTA'S BED, CALM, INNOCENT, ASLEEP. POLYPHONTES STANDS BESIDE THE BED WATCHING OEDIPUS, HIS EXPRESSION IS TROUBLED, PERHAPS THREATENING, HIS SWORD IS PARTIALLY DRAWN.

*

JOCASTA, WALKING VERY QUICKLY, STILL SMILING, ENTERS THE VAST AUDIENCE CHAMBER OF HER APARTMENTS. THE ROOM IS DARK. SOMEONE STEPS TOWARD HER. SHE IS FRIGHTENED. IT IS AN OLD MAN, A SHEPHERD: HUMBLE, AWED BY HIS SURROUNDINGS, BY MEETING HIS QUEEN. APHRON STANDS BESIDE HIM. JOCASTA, RECOVERING FROM HER MOMENTARY FRIGHT, PEERS CLOSELY AT THE SHEPHERD -- PARTLY TO SEE HIM IN THE DIM LIGHT; PARTLY AS IF SHE RECOGNIZED HIM. BUT SHE DOES NOT.

SHEPHERD: Your Majesty, may I speak to you?

JOCASTA: Not now.

SHE WALKS PAST HIM.

APHRON: He says...

JOCASTA: Not now.

SHE GOES INTO THE RECEPTION, ROOM, SHUTTING THE DOOR.

*

POLYPHONTES HEARS THE DOOR SHUT, SHEATHS HIS SWORD, LEAVES OEDIPUS' BEDSIDE.

*

AS JOCASTA WALKS ACROSS THE RECEPTION ROOM. POLYPHONTES ENTERS FROM THE BEDROOM.

JOCASTA: You may go. You will be safe now.

POLYPHONTES: Yes, your Majesty.

AS HE PASSES HER, SHE TOUCHES HIS ARM.

JOCASTA: Remember your promise.

POLYPHONTES: I will not forget it.

HE EXITS.

*

JOCASTA ENTERS THE BEDROOM, CLOSES THE DOOR, GOES TO THE BED. LEANING CLOSE TO OEDIPUS, SHE GENTLY CALLS HIS NAME.

JOCASTA: Oedipus. Oedipus.

HE OPENS HIS EYES, LOOKS AT HER SMILING. SHE SITS BESIDE HIM ON THE BED.

JOCASTA: Did you sleep?

OEDIPUS: I dreamt of you.

HE PULLS HER TO HIM AND KISSES HER.

You kept me safe... safe... safe...

JOCASTA: LAUGHING GENTLY.

From what?

SHE GOES TO OPEN THE BALCONY DOORS. SHE IS BATHED IN MOONLIGHT. OEDIPUS COMES TO HER, EMBRACES HER WITH URGENT PASSION. **JOCASTA**, DRAWS BACK A LITTLE

Tomorrow. Tomorrow we will be married.

OEDIPUS IGNORES HER PROTEST, KISSES HER UNTIL SHE RESPONDS TO HIS PASSION WITH HER OWN.

FROM THE BALCONY WE SEE THE PEOPLE LEAVING THE GATES, THE FULL MOON IS NEAR THE HORIZON.

*

A MONTAGE OF **JOCASTA** AND **OEDIPUS** MAKING LOVE -- PASSIONATELY AND TENDERLY, CONCLUDING WITH **JOCASTA**, IN DEEP WONDER, STUDYING THE BODY OF YOUNG **OEDIPUS**, HIS FACE, HIS CHEST. THEIR IMAGES ARE SUPERIMPOSED OVER AND DISSOLVED IN AND OUT OF THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCES:

SEQUENCE A: TORCHES BEING LIT IN THE THRONE ROOM. PREPARATIONS BEGINNING.

*

SEQUENCE B: **HAEMON**, WITH A SERVANT CARRYING A TORCH, IN ONE OF THE STOREROOMS IN THE BASEMENT OF THE PALACE. THEY WALK BETWEEN ROWS OF WINE JUGS. **HAEMON** EXAMINES THEM.

HAEMON: This and the next room -- take all the wine into the city tomorrow.

*

SEQUENCE C: A SMALL ROOM IN THE PALACE. HOLDING A LAMP, **APHRON** LEADS THE **SHEPHERD** IN.

APHRON: You can stay here.

SHEPHERD: Thank you, ma'am

APHRON PLACES THE LAMP ON A TABLE, TAKES OUT BLANKETS FROM A CHEST, AND LEAVES. THE SHEPHERD SITS DOWN ON A BENCH, THEN STRETCHES OUT. DELIGHTED TO BE IN THE PALACE, HE MAKES HIMSELF COMFORTABLE.

*

SEQUENCE D: PREPARATIONS IN THE KITCHENS. MANY PEOPLE CHOPPING, KNEADING, STIRRING, ETC. HUGE KETTLES AND IMPLEMENTS. MANY OPEN FIRES FOR COOKING.

*

SEQUENCE E: AT THE BACK OF THE PALACE, **ANIMALS** BEING SLAUGHTERED FOR THE FEAST. MOONLIGHT CASTS THE SHADOW OF THE PALACE OVER THE TORCH LIT SCENE. **KUPIA** WANDERING, SLOWLY, CRYING, IS FURTHER SADDENED BY SEEING THE ANIMALS BEING SLAUGHTERED. GRADUALLY, SHE ABSORBS THE FACT THAT SHE HAS FAILED, AND SHE IS ALONE.

THE IMAGES OF THE LOVE SCENE DISSOLVE INTO A VIEW FROM THE PALACE STEPS LOOKING THROUGH THE GATES TOWARD THE TOWN. THE LAST OF THE CROWD HAS DEPARTED. THE COURTYARD IS DESERTED EXCEPT FOR A FEW SOLDIERS AND GUARDS AT THE GATES. TORCH LIGHT FLICKERS IN THE TOWN IN THE DISTANCE.

*

HAEMON APPROACHES THE DOOR TO THE INNER COURT. IT IS NO LONGER GUARDED. HE OPENS THE DOOR AND GOES INTO THE COURTYARD. THE SPHINX'S PYRE HAS ALMOST BURNT OUT. HAEMON WATCHES IT FOR AWHILE. ONE OF

THE THREE REMAINING SOLDIERS COMES UP TO HIM.

HAEMON: The Sphinx?

SOLDIER: Yes, my Lord.

HAEMON: What was it like?

SOLDIER: Hard to describe.

HAEMON: NODS

Clear the courtyard and clean it.

HE STARTS OUT, THEN TURNS.

The Queen is to be married tomorrow.

THE SOLDIERS ARE SURPRISED AND PLEASED. AS HAEMON EXITS:

SOLDIER: Long live the Queen!

THE THREE SOLDIERS: Long live the Queen!

*

THE CURTAINS IN JOCASTA'S BEDROOM ARE GENTLY STIRRED BY THE WIND. IN BED, OEDIPUS' HEAD IS ON JOCASTA'S BREAST. THEIR EYES ARE CLOSED, BUT THEY ARE AWAKE.

OEDIPUS: Are you hungry?

JOCASTA: LAUGHING SOFTLY.

No. Are you?

OEDIPUS: Yes.

HE REACHES ACROSS HER TO GET THE BOWL OF FRUIT FROM THE TABLE. THE CRADLE IS ALSO NEAR THE BED ON THAT SIDE. OEDIPUS GLANCES AT IT, PERHAPS WONDERS ABOUT IT FOR A MOMENT, THEN HE SETS THE BOWL OF FRUIT ON THE BED, TAKES SOME GRAPES, PUTS ONE IN JOCASTA'S MOUTH.

I'm always hungry. My mother used to worry about me.

JOCASTA: When did you leave your home?

OEDIPUS: AS HE EATS, JOCASTA GETS OUT OF BED.

A year ago? I don't remember.

JOCASTA: Do they know where you are?

OEDIPUS: Who?

JOCASTA: Your mother, your father.

OEDIPUS: No.

HE SETS THE FRUIT ASIDE. JOCASTA HAS PUT ON A LOOSE, DARK ROBE. SHE WALKS AROUND THE BED, SITS BESIDE OEDIPUS.

JOCASTA: Don't you think they worry?

OEDIPUS SHRUGS. HE ROLLS OVER TO LIE ON HIS STOMACH.
JOCASTA STROKES HIS BACK. JOCASTA SPEAKS SOFTLY.

Where is it?

OEDIPUS: What?

JOCASTA: Your home.

OEDIPUS: SLEEPY AND CONTENT, HE FORGETS HIS CAUTION.

Corinth.

JOCASTA: Prince of Corinth?

OEDIPUS: My father is King Polybus.

JOCASTA KISSES HIM.

Does that please you?

JOCASTA: Why did you leave?

HE PULLS AWAY FROM HER. SHE SAYS TENDERLY:

Tell me.

OEDIPUS: I hated him.

JOCASTA: Who?

OEDIPUS: My father.

JOCASTA: Enough to just leave -- to wander alone in the desert?

OEDIPUS: He was always preaching duty and good -- good and evil. Oh Gods, how he used to rant about our duty to fight the world, make money. Corinth is the richest realm in Greece. Our ports swarm with ships and slaves, the slave ships of Hades. I felt guilty of the world's torments before I was old enough to think. Filthy with guilt, filthy with riches. I wanted to kill him.

JOCASTA: And your mother?

OEDIPUS: My mother loved my father.

JOCASTA: Did you love her?

OEDIPUS: Very much.

JOCASTA: You said before that you ran from a prophecy.

OEDIPUS: ANGRILY SHAKING OFF HER HAND; THEN GENTLY, APOLOGIZES.

I'm sorry.

HE TAKES HER HAND.

JOCASTA: What was the prophecy?

OEDIPUS: That I would, in fact, kill my father... And...

JOCASTA: And?

OEDIPUS: SPEAKS ANGRILY, BUT HIS ANGER IS NOT DIRECTED AT HER.

And perhaps the priest was right! I hated him, Jocasta. I wanted to kill him. How I wished him dead. Him -- and the world he believed in, the rapacious world he created, the constant need to expand his empire!

JOCASTA: Is that all there was to the prophecy?

OEDIPUS: No.

JOCASTA: What was the rest?

OEDIPUS: It was absurd. Do you believe what the oracles say?

JOCASTA: Not very often.

OEDIPUS: HE MOVES AWAY FROM HER.

The Delphic Oracle said I would marry my mother.

ABRUPTLY HE TURNS TO FACE HER.

Does that disgust you?

JOCASTA: No.

AFTER A MOMENT SHE GETS UP, GOES TO SHUT THE BALCONY DOORS AND CLOSES THE SHUTTERS. HER HANDS ARE SHAKING, THE FAMILIARITY OF THE PROPHECY UNNERVES HER.

OEDIPUS: TAKING HER HANDS AS SHE RETURNS TO HIM, AND PULLING HER CLOSE.

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have told you.

JOCASTA: I've heard prophecies like that before. It's a cruel joke, I think, the Gods -- or maybe it's just the Oracles -- enjoy playing with those of us who ask questions, who search for answers.

OEDIPUS: I'll never go back to Corinth.

JOCASTA: No, you'll never go back

OEDIPUS: I love you.

JOCASTA LEANS OVER TO KISS HIM.

DISSOLVE TO: A MONTAGE THROUGH THE REST OF THE NIGHT.

SEQUENCE F: HAEMON STANDING ALONE ON THE BALCONY OUTSIDE THE THRONE ROOM, LOOKING OVER THE DARK CITY, WHILE PREPARATIONS CONTINUE IN THE THRONE ROOM.

*

SEQUENCE G: CREON SITTING ON A BED IN A COMFORTABLE, BUT TOTALLY ISOLATED, HEAVILY GUARDED, PRISON CELL. HIS WOUNDS HAVE BEEN ATTENDED TO.

*

SEQUENCE H: THE KITCHENS WITH GREAT VESSELS OF PREPARED FOOD. THE LAST FEW PEOPLE FINISH CLEANING UP AND BEGIN TO LEAVE.

*

SEQUENCE I: THE SHEPHERD PEACEFULLY ASLEEP

*

SEQUENCE J: HAEMON, WALKING DOWN THE HALL, COMES TO THE DOOR OF OEDIPUS' ROOM. IT IS OPEN. HE STOPS, LOOKS IN, ENTERS. AS HE STANDS IN THE EMPTY ROOM, THE FIRST RAYS OF THE MORNING SUN SHINE THROUGH THE BARRED WINDOWS.
HAEMON GOES TO THE WINDOW, LOOKS OUT.

*

SEQUENCE K: THE SUN RISING.

JOCASTA SITS BESIDE THE SLEEPING OEDIPUS, TENDERLY STUDYING THE BEAUTY OF HIS YOUTHFUL FACE. IT IS THE FIRST TIME SHE LOVES SOMEONE WHO GENUINELY RETURNS HER LOVE.

*

AS HAEMON COMES OUT FROM THE NORTH ROOMS, HE MEETS KUPIA IN THE HALL, DOWNCAST, VERY SAD.

HAEMON: What is it Kupia?

KUPIA: Lord Acmon is dead.

HAEMON: How so?

KUPIA: He's lying in blood in his cell -- a sword...

HAEMON: I see.

HAEMON PUTS HIS ARM AROUND KUPIA'S SHOULDERS AND HOLDS HER CLOSE.

KUPIA: Why does everything end in sorrow? Not only the bad things, but the good things, too. Everything leads to such terrible sadness, tragedy -- death.

HARMON: Don't remember only his death, remember your years of friendship. All that he taught you. His love for you, for the Queen. His love and respect

for my father as well.

KUPIA: But to kill himself, just because...

HAEMON: His sense of honor was very strong. It may have been misplaced, but he was an honorable man.

KUPIA: Who invented honor? It seems to me more deadly than the two edged sword.

*

THEY HAVE WALKED OUTSIDE INTO THE MORNING SUNLIGHT -- CLEAR, BRIGHT, PURE.

KUPIA: May I ride Nonios?

HAEMON: Of course, the fresh air will do you good. My horse is in the Queen's stable this morning.

HE KISSES HER FOREHEAD.

I will see to Lord Acmon.

KUPIA BEGINS TO CRY AGAIN, AND RUNS OFF.

*

JOCASTA, NOW WEARING A WHITE ROBE, ENTERS HER RECEPTION ROOM, CLOSING THE BEDROOM DOOR. THE BALCONY DOORS ARE OPEN. HOLDING A CAT, SHE MOVES TOWARD THE FRESH AIR, SHE IS HAPPY, BUT TROUBLED. THE CAT JUMPS FROM HER ARMS. KNEELING, SHE PLAYS AND TALKS TO THE CAT .

JOCASTA: What do you think of prophecies? Prophecies. Prophecies. -- They're all the same. -- Prince of Corinth!

SHE PICKS UP THE CAT AND HUGS IT TO HER. APHRON ENTERS. JOCASTA LOOKS UP AS THE CAT JUMPS FROM HER ARMS AGAIN. APHRON SMILES -- HAPPY IN JOCASTA'S PLAYFULNESS,

HAPPINESS.

APHRON: Good morning, your Majesty.

JOCASTA: I'm going to be married today. Aphrodite, I'm going to be married.

APHRON: The Gods have blessed you.

JOCASTA: They died in the night -- of jealousy. No God could know my happiness.

APHRON: Be careful, my child, of the Gods -- many eyes, ears. Don't challenge them.

JOCASTA: Is my gown ready? My robes? Is the feast prepared? Find Haemon. And for Oedipus -- have the King's robes ready for him. Take them to his rooms. He'll be there soon. The North Rooms. Then we'll close off that wing -- that prison. We'll have light in the palace!

APHRON: Yes, your Majesty, yes.

JOCASTA: Have someone there to help him dress. Hurry!

SHE TAKES KEYS FROM A DRAWER, GIVES THEM TO APHRON, AND URGES HER TOWARD THE DOOR.

APHRON: There's a shepherd to see you.

JOCASTA: So early?

APHRON: He's waited all night.

JOCASTA: A shepherd? Why?

APHRON: He has something to tell you, some wonderful news, he said.

JOCASTA: Let him come in.

APHRON EXITS. **JOCASTA** WHIRLS AROUND EXUBERANTLY, FRIGHTENING THE CAT, WHICH RUNS ONTO THE BALCONY.

JOCASTA STARTS AFTER IT AS THE SHEPHERD ENTERS. SHE STOPS, TURNS TO HIM, SMILING.

JOCASTA: So, Shepherd, Aphron says you have good news for me. Welcome.

THROUGH THE SCENE OF THE SHEPHERD'S REVELATION THE QUALITY OF THE PURE MORNING LIGHT CHANGES TO BECOME A HARSH GLARE.

SHEPHERD: Yes, your Majesty. It will make you happy.

JOCASTA: LAUGHING

I'm too happy already. -- You've waited all night. Where did you sleep?

SHEPHERD: In a little room. Your serving maid, good as a goddess, found a place for me.

JOCASTA: Where is your home?

SHEPHERD: In the hills. I only came to town to beg feed for my sheep. In the drought...

JOCASTA: They have been dying -- I know. And the people -- the land... But, the Sphinx is dead! Everything is different now. We will send to Aulis, Hyria, Thespiae. We will get food. They will not refuse us. I'm to be married today.

SHEPHERD: I heard the announcement.

JOCASTA: Did you want to wish me well, kind Shepherd.

SHEPHERD: With all my heart, my Queen. -- I have a gift.

JOCASTA: A gift?

SHEPHERD: A secret. I could not tell you while King Laius lived.

JOCASTA: Laius? -- What is it?

SHE LOOKS SHARPLY AT HIM, TRYING TO REMEMBER HIS FACE.

SHEPHERD: Many years ago...

JOCASTA: SHE STARES AT HIM NOW, ALMOST FEARFUL.

What is it?

SHEPHERD: I'm the shepherd who took your son.

JOCASTA: Why do you come to me? Why now? Leave me alone!

SHEPHERD: QUIETLY, ALMOST A WHISPER, BUT AN ARRESTING WHISPER THAT HALTS JOCASTA'S BUDDING HYSTERIA.

He's not dead.

JOCASTA: My son?

SHEPHERD: I didn't kill him.

JOCASTA: ALMOST AFRAID TO SAY IT.

Not dead?

SHEPHERD: He's alive.

JOCASTA: Where?

SHEPHERD: Let me tell you the story.

JOCASTA: Yes, tell me! Tell me quickly. -- He's alive?

SHEPHERD: Yes, your Majesty.

JOCASTA: Why haven't you come before? Why didn't you take pity on me before?

SHEPHERD: Until King Laius died, I was a traitor -- a criminal -- outside the law.

JOCASTA: Where is he?

SHEPHERD: When the King ordered the child to be killed, they sent for me. You were so young. I thought my heart would break for you. Prince Creon spoke, he said: "Take this boy far away and kill him. It is the King's command." You held the infant, you could not part from him, tears ran down your face.

JOCASTA: TEARS RUN FROM JOCASTA'S OPEN STARING EYES.

Please, Shepherd, don't...

SHEPHERD: Prince Creon took him from you and gave him to me. I took him because it was the King's command. I took him to Mount Cithaeron -- but I could not kill him. His ankles were pierced and bound. I left him...

JOCASTA: Alone?

SHEPHERD: Early the next morning I went back. But he was gone. I searched, but couldn't find him.

JOCASTA: You didn't find him?

SHEPHERD: SMILING

Later I met a shepherd. He had found the child and given it to his childless master.

JOCASTA: And you saw him safe.

SHEPHERD: Not since I left him on Mount Cithaeron, but I have talked with the Corinthian shepherd since then.

JOCASTA: Corinth?

SHEPHERD: Your son has been brought up as Prince of Corinth.

JOCASTA: WHISPERS IN QUIET DISBELIEF.

Corinth?

SHEPHERD: That is my secret, your Majesty. My gift for your wedding.

JOCASTA: Corinth? Did you say -- Corinth?

SHEPHERD: Yes, your Majesty. He has been brought up as great King Polybus' son. A glorious fate.

THE SHEPHERD, NOW CONCERNED AND AFRAID, STARES AT JOCASTA, WHO HAS TURNED PALE.

Your Majesty?

HE STEPS TOWARD HER.

Your Majesty?

JOCASTA: KEEPING HIM AT A DISTANCE.

No! -- What is his name?

SHEPHERD: His name? I don't know, your Majesty.

JOCASTA: Does the house of Corinth have more than one son?

SHEPHERD: He's their only son -- and heir.

THERE IS A LONG PAUSE. **JOCASTA TRIES TO SMILE.**

JOCASTA: Thank you... for telling me... that my son... is alive.

SHEPHERD: Your Majesty?

JOCASTA: RAISES HER HAND FOR SILENCE.

Thank you... kind Shepherd...

SHE PAUSES UNABLE TO GO ON. THEN AFTER A VERY LONG MOMENT:

Do not speak of this to anyone.

SHEPHERD: COMPLIANT, BUT DISAPPOINTED.

If you wish, your Majesty. But...

JOCASTA: You must swear by your life to tell no one. For twenty years you have carried this knowledge. Carry it to your grave. Will you swear to that?

SHEPHERD: CONFUSED, BUT DEVOTED TO THE QUEEN.

I swear it, my Queen, by all the Gods -- if you wish.

JOCASTA: Good! Good! By the Gods, yes!

SHE KISSES HIS CHEEK.

Thank you, Shepherd.

SHEPHERD: HE IS MUCH SURPRISED, BUT ALSO EMBOLDENED TO ASK A FAVOR.

May I come to your wedding?

JOCASTA: My wedding? Of course. Of course. I'm to be married today.

AGAIN, TEARS STREAM DOWN HER FACE.

Yes, come. Come.

SHEPHERD: Thank you, my Queen.

HE EDGES TOWARD THE DOOR.

JOCASTA: Remember your oath.

SHEPHERD: Always, my Queen -- forever.

AT THE DOOR, HE TURNS AND ADDS:

I'm an old man, a very old man. Forever is not too long -- may it please my great queen.

AFTER THE SHEPHERD EXITS, JOCASTA STANDS ALONE AND VERY STILL IN THE HARSH GLARE OF THE SUN. THE CAT BRUSHES AGAINST HER LEGS. SHE LOOKS DOWN, BUT DOES NOT PICK IT UP. SHE MOVES TO THE DOOR OF THE BEDROOM, STANDS FOR A MOMENT AND OPENS IT. INSIDE THE SHUTTERED BEDROOM, A PATTERN OF LIGHT AND SHADOW FALLS ACROSS THE BED. OEDIPUS IS STILL ASLEEP. JOCASTA CLOSES THE DOOR AGAIN, SOFTLY, GENTLY. SHE TURNS AND BEGINS TO RUN -- THROUGH THE RECEPTION ROOM, THROUGH THE AUDIENCE ROOM AND INTO THE HALL -- RUNNING LIGHTLY, BAREFOOTED AND AS FAST AS SHE CAN.

*

KUPIA, IN THE STABLES, MOUNTS HAEMON'S HORSE, NONIOS, WITH THE HELP OF THE STABLEMAN WHO THEN OPENS THE DOORS FOR KUPIA TO RIDE OUT TOWARD THE WEST GATE AND CLIFFS ABOVE WHERE THE SPHINX HAD STOOD.

*

AS THE STABLEMAN CLOSES THE STABLE DOORS, JOCASTA, OUT OF BREATH, ENTERS FROM THE HALL DOOR. THE STABLEMAN IS STARTLED TO SEE HER IN HER DRESSING GOWN.

JOCASTA: Saddle Abraxas for me. Creon won't be riding him for a long time.

STABLEMAN: Of course, your majesty.

JOCASTA: And a cloak, please give me a cloak.

HE TAKES ONE OF THE GUARD'S GOLDEN CLOAKS FROM A PEG ON THE WALL.

STABLEMAN: Your Majesty, young Kupia was just here --

JOCASTA: So early?

STABLEMAN: She rode toward the cliffs. She seemed very sad.

JOCASTA: Why?

STABLEMAN: I don't know, your Majesty. She said Lord Haemon had given her permission to ride Nonios.

JOCASTA MOUNTS AND RIDES OUT TOWARD THE CLIFFS, FOLLOWING KUPIA'S ROUTE. THE STABLEMAN WATCHES HER RETREATING FIGURE FOR SOME TIME.

*

ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE, FAR IN THE DISTANCE TOWARD THE WEST, WE SEE KUPIA GALLOPING ALONG THE HIGH EDGE OF THE CLIFFS AND, AFTER A LITTLE WHILE, JOCASTA RIDING FAR BEHIND. GRADUALLY, JOCASTA OVERTAKES KUPIA.

AT THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF, BELOW WHICH THE SPHINX HAD STOOD ON HER PROMONTORY, JOCASTA AND KUPIA DISMOUNT. EXHILARATED BY THE WILD RACE, AND THE COOL MORNING AIR, THEY LAUGH.

KUPIA: My Queen! My Queen, why are you out here this morning?

JOCASTA: To avoid questions from little gods like you!

KUPIA HOWLS WITH LAUGHTER. JOCASTA JOINS HER WITH HER OWN WILD LAUGHTER. ENJOYING THE VIEW, THEY WALK ABOUT.

Haemon said: "Ride my horse"?

KUPIA: Quick as light! Nonios means "quick as light."

JOCASTA: Are you reading the equestrian manuals?

KUPIA: All our horses' names have meaning. Abraxas once belonged to Helios.

JOCASTA: The Sun God. Maybe I believe in the Sun God. Abraxas "I create as I speak."

SUDDENLY, KUPIA BURSTS INTO TEARS.

Kupia! What's the matter.

KUPIA: Lord Acmon used to bring me here to watch the Sphinx.

JOCASTA: He's a very good friend.

KUPIA: He's dead

JOCASTA: Kupia?

KUPIA: I saw him last night, in a pool of blood.

JOCASTA: Kupia. Oh my sweet Kupia!

JOCASTA REACHES OUT AND PULLS KUPIA TO HER,

KUPIA: He thought he had dishonored his friend. Creon was his friend.

JOCASTA: I should have known.

KUPIA: He loved you very much. He would have been a wonderful husband.

JOCASTA: Oh Kupia, no, that could never have happened.

KUPIA: I know, I know. Oedipus loves you as well. He really loves you.

JOCASTA: Hush. Don't speak...

JOCASTA CONTINUES TO HOLD KUPIA CLOSE.

KUPIA: You will be so happy.

JOCASTA: Your world has always been made of joy. But now, now... Once your heart

is broken... Yes, once your heart is broken, you can... You don't have to cry anymore.

JOCASTA HOLDS KUPIA VERY CLOSE.

We need to return.

*

JOCASTA AND KUPIA RIDE BACK TO THE PALACE.

*

GUARDS AND ASTERIUS IN THE JAIL YARD, REMOVING THE BODY OF ACMON.

ASTERIUS: Creon's orders. Take him to the inner courtyard -- where the Sphinx was burned.

SOLDIER: Creon's in jail.

ASTERIUS: Not for long, you can be sure. The Queen dotes on him.

SOLDIER: He's a menace to Thebes, to peace, to being able to sleep at night.

ASTERIUS: She's very clever, you wait and see, like brother like sister. They might have been born from a single egg.

SOLDIER: Oedipus may change that.

*

JOCASTA AND KUPIA AT THE STABLES.

JOCASTA: **TO THE STABLEMAN:**

See that Abraxas is exercised every day.

*

TO KUPIA, AS THEY START DOWN THE HALL.

Go, help your mother with Oedipus. Help with his regalia. See to his crown. Today he becomes Thebes' King.

KUPIA: I will worship him, because you love him.

JOCASTA: In time to come, he will be called a good king. Great King Oedipus.

THEY'VE REACHED JOCASTA'S APARTMENT,

JOCASTA: Go. Dress. Something suitable. You can bring the Imperial -- the King's Crown, Little Goddess of Love

KUPIA: Because you love him.

*

JOCASTA WALKS THROUGH THE EMPTY ROOMS, AND PAUSES AT THE BEDROOM DOOR. AS SHE OPENS THE DOOR, THE CAT MEOWS AND JUMPS ONTO THE BED. SHE WATCHES AS THE CAT LICKS OEDIPUS' FACE. HE WAKES, PETS THE CAT. JOCASTA SMILES, MOVES TO THE BED AND STANDS LOOKING AT HIM, THEN KNEELS AND TOUCHES HER LIPS TO OEDIPUS' HAND.

OEDIPUS: QUIETLY, TENDERLY:

Good morning, my love. You smell so fresh. Have you been in the cool wind?

JOCASTA BURIES HER FACE AGAINST THE COVERS. HE PUTS HIS HAND ON HERS. HE SENSES THAT SHE IS CRYING.

Jocasta?

HE TRIES TO RAISE HER HAND, HER FACE.

Jocasta?

ABRUPTLY, SHE STANDS UP. TAKES OFF HER WHITE ROBE, DROPS IT ON THE BED. IN HER NIGHTGOWN, KEEPING HER FACE TURNED AWAY. SHE WALKS TOWARD THE WINDOWS, CLOSE TO THE WALL NEAR THE STANDING MIRROR.

Jocasta, are you crying? What is it? Why?

HE SITS UP, THE COVERS FALL BACK, REVEALING HIS NAKEDNESS. SHE SEES HIS IMAGE IN THE MIRROR.

JOCASTA: Don't get up!

SHE STARTS TO OPEN THE SHUTTERS, BUT CLOSES THEM AGAIN.

I'm being...

OEDIPUS: You're acting like a silly girl. No! I don't mean...

JOCASTA: Hush!

OEDIPUS SITS QUIETLY, IDLY PETTING THE CAT. HE WATCHES **JOCASTA**. HER BACK IS TO HIM.

Oedipus?

HE DOES NOT ANSWER.

Oedipus?

OEDIPUS: Say you love me.

JOCASTA: I do.

OEDIPUS: Do you? Say it.

JOCASTA: I love you.

OEDIPUS: Then, why are you crying?

JOCASTA: SHE GOES TO HER DRESSING TABLE, WIPES THE TEARS FROM HER FACE, STUDIES HER IMAGE IN THE MIRROR.

I'm too old to cry.

OEDIPUS: PLAYFULLY EXASPERATED, IN AN OLD MAN'S VOICE.

Is this going to set a precedent? Am I going to wake up every morning to this? Because, if I am... we shall have separate rooms. You will only be allowed to see me when you are feeling kittenish. I shall come to you only when I am feeling -- older than Cronus.

HE HAS PUT ON JOCASTA'S WHITE ROBE AND TIED A WHITE SCARF ON HIS HEAD TO LOOK LIKE A WIG, AND NOW, ASSUMING THE EXPRESSION AND GAIT OF AN OLD MAN, USING A THRYOS AS A PILGRIM'S STAFF, HE COMES UP BEHIND JOCASTA , EMBRACES HER. HIS VOICE QUAVERING.

I am old. I am old Father Time.

JOCASTA: SCREAMS AS SHE FEELS HIS TOUCH AND SEES HIS ANTIC IN THE MIRROR.

Oedipus! Stop it! Please!

OEDIPUS IS IMMEDIATELY SOBERED.

Please.

OEDIPUS: TAKES OFF THE SCARF.

I'm sorry.

HE TOUCHES HER HAIR GENTLY, AND HER FACE.

I thought my love gave me the privilege of understanding you. But I see

I'm hurting you in some way that I don't understand. Forgive me.

HE TURNS TO SIT ON THE BED BOWING HIS HEAD.

JOCASTA: Are you from Corinth?

OEDIPUS: Did I tell you that?

JOCASTA: Yes. You told me many things last night. Are they true?

OEDIPUS: RAISES HIS HEAD, RELIEVED.

I thought I dreamt it. Maybe that's why I feel so lighthearted this morning. It's wonderful to be rid of my secrets. Is that what's upset you? I shouldn't have told you. Why should you hear my confessions? Forget it. Please forget all of it. I'm from the sky, the sun was my father, the moon, my mother -- and I was born just to love you.

JOCASTA: What if the prophecy came true?

OEDIPUS: Prophecy? -- I'll never go back! Don't condemn me for that!

JOCASTA: But if... if it had?

OEDIPUS: WITH INTENSE REVULSION, IN A HARD AND LEVEL VOICE WHICH ALLOWS FOR NO FURTHER QUESTIONING.

I would kill myself.

JOCASTA: A CRY OF DESIRE, LONGING, DESPAIR:

Oedipus! Oh Oedipus.

OEDIPUS: Did you think that what I told you as a prophecy had happened? Did you think I had lied to you?

JOCASTA: SHE GOES TO HIM.

No. Oh, no.

THEY EMBRACE. KISS.

OEDIPUS: If I live to be as old as the seer, maybe I shall understand you.

HE KISSES HER AGAIN.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR CAUSES JOCASTA TO BREAK GUILTYLY FROM THE EMBRACE. SHE WHIRLS TO FACE THE DOOR. OEDIPUS IS GENTLY AMUSED AT THIS REACTION.

JOCASTA: Who is it?

KUPIA ENTERS.

KUPIA: Mother says the crown is not with the other things.

SHE STARES IN FRANK ADMIRATION AT THE HALF DRESSED **OEDIPUS** AND, UNABLE TO RESIST, GIGGLES AT HIS COSTUME. HE LAUGHS IN RETURN.

JOCASTA: TO **OEDIPUS**

Dress now. You must go and ready yourself for the... ceremony.

*

JOCASTA MAKES KUPIA GO BEFORE HER FROM THE BEDROOM AND SHUTS THE DOOR. SHE MOVES A FEW STEPS INTO THE RECEPTION ROOM, THEN STOPS AS IF SHE HAD FORGOTTEN WHAT SHE WAS GOING TO DO.

KUPIA: WHISPERS TO **JOCASTA**

You will be so happy.

THEN HER SORROW WELLING UP, SHE HUGS **JOCASTA** AND BEGINS TO CRY. **JOCASTA** GENTLY EXTRICATING HERSELF,

BARELY ABLE TO HIDE HER OWN PAIN.

JOCASTA: Oh Kupia, Kupia, I should have acted sooner.

TEARS AGAIN WELL UP IN JOCASTA'S EYES. SHE AND KUPIA HOLD EACH OTHER CLOSE.

In a little while, a new world begins. A better place. A place of peace. A place of love. Dry your tears, Kupia.

JOCASTA RELEASES HERSELF FROM KUPIA'S ARMS.

REMEMBERING THE CROWN, SHE TAKES A KEY FROM A DRAWER TO UNLOCK A CHEST. FROM THE CHEST SHE TAKES OUT THE ROYAL CROWN (NOT SO ELABORATE AS THE EMERALD CROWN). SHE LOOKS AT IT A MOMENT, THEN HANDS IT TO KUPIA, WHO TAKES IT REVERENTLY.

KUPIA: How beautiful!

OEDIPUS OPENS THE BEDROOM DOOR AND STEPS INTO THE ROOM. THEY BOTH TURN TO HIM. KUPIA KNEELS AND, PRESENTING THE CROWN TO HIM, SAYS:

King of Thebes!

OEDIPUS IS DELIGHTED. HAEMON HAS ENTERED FROM THE AUDIENCE ROOM JUST AS KUPIA KNEELS. HE WATCHES. TAKING IN THE MIXTURE OF INTENSE EMOTIONS, AS WELL AS AN ALMOST INCANDESCENT SENSE OF JOY.

JOCASTA: STERNLY, BUT GENTLY.

Get up, Kupia. Go along now.

TO OEDIPUS:

Go with her.

OEDIPUS KISSES JOCASTA. AS HE AND KUPIA WALK TO THE DOOR, HE SMILES AT

HAEMON. HAEMON NODS, MAKING AN EFFORT TO SMILE. **KUPIA AND OEDIPUS EXIT.** JOCASTA AND HAEMON, FOR THE FIRST TIME, FIND THEMSELVES UNCOMFORTABLE IN EACH OTHER'S PRESENCE. THEN HAEMON STARTS TOWARD HER, SHE EXTENDS HER HANDS. THEY EMBRACE.

*

AS **KUPIA AND OEDIPUS WALK ALONG THE HALL,** KUPIA TURNS THE IMPERIAL CROWN ROUND AND ROUND IN HER HANDS.

KUPIA: Isn't it beautiful. It's yours, you know.

SHE EXTENDS IT, THEN WITH A LAUGH, WITHDRAWS IT, BREAKS INTO A RUN. HE RUNS AFTER HER. THE HALL REVERBERATES WITH THEIR YOUNG LAUGHTER AS THEY RUN DOWN ITS LENGTH. HE CATCHES HER AND SNATCHES THE CROWN. THEY CONTINUE WALKING.

Give it back.

OEDIPUS: It's mine.

KUPIA: Give it back!

SHE GRABS FOR THE CROWN, BUT HE HOLDS IT OUT OF REACH.

*

JOCASTA AND HAEMON STAND IN THE DOORWAY TO THE BALCONY, NOT QUITE KNOWING WHAT TO SAY TO EACH OTHER:

HAEMON: The gates are unlocked.

JOCASTA: I used to think one could go out the other six gates, that the Sphinx didn't matter.

HAEMON: They've burned her body.

JOCASTA: The riddle is solved and we're -- free. Quite free. -- I'll abdicate.

HAEMON: Abdicate?

JOCASTA: Let Oedipus rule alone.

HAEMON IS SHOCKED.

I can't marry him. He'll rule wisely.

HAEMON: Without mercy. You're the one who is wise.

JOCASTA: He's a just man.

HAEMON: And violent. Savage.

JOCASTA: He loves me.

HAEMON: If you put Thebes in his hands... It's too much power. He knows nothing of Thebes. You must accept him -- if you want to or not.

JOCASTA: It's myself I must accept.

CRYING OUT IN PAIN, SHE PUTS HER ARMS AROUND HAEMON, SOBBING.

I love him, Haemon. I do love him.

HE HOLDS HER, STROKES HER HAIR, FEELING THE LOSS OF LOVE AS ACUTELY AS SHE DOES. HER CRYING SUBSIDES. THEN, MURMURING TO HERSELF:

I didn't know who he was.

HAEMON: Who is he?

JOCASTA: STILL VERY QUIETLY, TO HERSELF

Did I?

THEN TO HAEMON.

A prince. Prince of Corinth.

SHE TURNS ABRUPTLY AND WALKS INTO THE BEDROOM. AFTER A MOMENT, HAEMON FOLLOWS HER.

*

HAEMON: An alliance between Thebes and Corinth! But that is a gift from the Gods! Corinth is the richest port in all of Greece! He's their Prince?

JOCASTA SHAKES HER HEAD. THEN, WITH VIOLENT ENERGY, SHE STRIDES TO THE SHUTTERS, YANKS THEM OPEN, AND TURNS TO **HAEMON**:

JOCASTA: We need more light! We invented the Gods, put words in their mouths, taught them to judge -- as we judge. Yes! -- I love him, Haemon. I do truly love him. Is everything prepared for the wedding?

HAEMON: I'll send the guards to escort you.

HE BOWS AND TURNS TO LEAVE.

JOCASTA: Creon's guards...

HAEMON: Have been confined to barracks

JOCASTA: Bring Creon to the throne room.

HAEMON NODS, HIS BACK TO HER.

How is he?

HAEMON: In pain.

HE TURNS.

What sentence will you give him?

JOCASTA: Exile. Perhaps. Banishment? I don't know. He is obsessed with violence...

HAEMON: What man is not?

JOCASTA: He might raise an army -- even against Thebes. The compulsion to fight! My father, Laius, Creon, Oedipus -- even you have fought battles I will bring peace, I promise. Let Creon appear in a plain tunic, one of your own if necessary. No military trappings.

HAEMON EXITS. JOCASTA GOES TO THE OPEN BALCONY DOORS.

*

PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO GATHER IN THE COURTYARD. THEY ARE DRESSED IN LIGHTER-COLORED CLOTHING. THEY SMILE AND TALK WITH EACH OTHER. SEVERAL PRIESTS AND ATTENDANTS MOUNT THE STEPS THAT LEAD TO THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO. FOLLOWING THEM, TWO WHITE LAMBS ARE LED IN. AS THEY CROSS THE THRESHOLD OF THE TEMPLE, THE DEEP SHADOW FROM WITHIN MAKES THEM APPEAR TO TURN BLACK.

*

JOCASTA CROSSES THE BEDROOM TO THE BLACK-DRAPED CRADLE AND BEGINS, METHODICALLY, TO FOLD UP THE DRAPERY AND BEDCLOTHES. **APHRON** ENTERS CARRYING JOCASTA'S STATE ROBES. SHE IS SURPRISED AT WHAT **JOCASTA** IS DOING.

APHRON: Your Majesty?

JOCASTA CONTINUES FOLDING THE BEDCLOTHES.

What are you doing? You must dress.

APHRON LAYS THE ROBES ON THE BED, GOES TO GET A GOWN FROM A CHEST, AND THE EMERALD CROWN. **JOCASTA**, WITHOUT ANSWERING, WITHOUT

HURRYING, FINISHES HER TASK, THEN PLACES THE FOLDED MATERIALS IN THE CRADLE.

JOCASTA: Take this away.

APHRON: But, your Majesty, the time...

JOCASTA: Take it away.

APHRON PICKS UP THE CRADLE AND TAKES IT OUT. JOCASTA REMAINS VERY QUIET, VERY CALM. SHE LOOKS AT THE BED, TOUCHES THE ROBES. APHRON RETURNS:

APHRON: Your Majesty...

JOCASTA: Thank you Aphron, Aphrodite. You were named for the Goddess of Love.

APHRON: I had amusing parents.

JOCASTA: Your daughter and I were out riding this morning.

APHRON: Riding what?

JOCASTA: Horses, my goddess, horses. She was on Haemon's Nonios -- quick as light.

APHRON IS ABOUT TO OBJECT, BUT JOCASTA, PROGRESSIVELY MORE DISTRACTED, WANDERS ABOUT THE ROOM.

We went to the Sphinx's rock. Where she jumped -- died. I saw her, Aphrodite, I saw her before she was burned. She was beautiful.

Acmon is dead. Kupia saw him. He was a good friend -- like a father. Like a real father -- might have been. I think he fell on his sword. Creon should... Comfort her, be kind to her.

I will dress now.

SHE TAKES OFF HER NIGHTGOWN, LETTING IT FALL TO THE FLOOR. NUDE, SHE STANDS TALL LIKE THE GODDESS RISING

FROM THE SEA'S FOAM. SHE SAYS JUST ABOVE A WHISPER:

My child is alive.

APHRON: Your Majesty?

JOCASTA: Yes, alive. Last night he entered the darkness where the seeds of his life were planted, and *forgotten* in his fathers' quest -- for what? Immortality? I will be happy in the arms of the one who loves me, flesh of my flesh, as I love him. Why would I not acquiesce?

APHRON: Your destiny is love... be careful.

JOCASTA: Why was this love assigned as the exclusive pleasure of the Gods?

APHRON: You'll have to answer that for yourself.

JOCASTA: We humans were, no doubt, created by such a sacred alliance. Why does an act of love inspire greater horror than the murder of millions on the fields of battle?

APHRON: Ask Zeus. Better yet, ask Hera. Does Oedipus know who you are...

JOCASTA: None of us know who we are... As men struggle to possess the world, to secure their property rights, they've lost sight of the beauiful dream of who they could be. Having lost their trust, they will never know who...

APHRON: ...who he is?

JOCASTA: Even you, Aphrodite, dally where you should not.

APHRON: Your Majesty -- forgive my transgressions.

JOCASTA: Kupia belongs to you. Creon can never claim her. One day, tell her who her father is. Oedipus belongs to me. Be kind to him, as you have always been kind to me.

APHRON: Yes, your Majesty.

JOCASTA: Aphrodite -- who rose from chaos and danced on the sea....

APHRON: Oh, your Majesty!...

THEY BOTH BEGIN, LIGHTLY, TO LAUGH, DANCE A FEW STEPS.
THEN, WITH APHRON'S HELP, JOCASTA BEGINS TO DRESS.

JOCASTA: All children belong to their mothers. Oedipus does not know... must never know.

*

IN HIS ROOM, **OEDIPUS** STANDS QUITE STILL AS SEVERAL PEOPLE HELP HIM TO DON THE HEAVY, PURPLE ROBES OF STATE. HE IS PENSIVE, SERIOUS. NO ONE SPEAKS. TO ONE SIDE STANDS A PAGE, HOLDING A PILLOW ON WHICH RESTS THE IMPERIAL CROWN. WHEN HE IS READY, **OEDIPUS** WALKS TO THE DOOR. THE PAGE FOLLOWS HIM. **KUPIA** TAKES THE PILLOW AND THE IMPERIAL CROWN FROM THE PAGE.

*

AS **OEDIPUS** COMES OUT, THE GUARDS IN THE HALLWAY FORM IN RANKS BEHIND HIM -- AND ALL MOVE TOWARD THE THRONE ROOM. THERE IS A STRIKING DIFFERENCE IN THE BEARING OF THE GUARDS: ORDER HAS COME TO THE PALACE.

*

IN THE THRONE ROOM, WHICH IS NOW FORMALLY DECORATED, TO ONE SIDE, ALONE NEAR THE WALL, STANDS THE SHEPHERD. HE IS ENTHRALLED BY HIS SURROUNDINGS, AND GAZES FROM PLACE TO PLACE, PERSON TO PERSON. THE ASSEMBLED NOBLES TALK AMONG THEMSELVES.

*

OUTSIDE THE THRONE ROOM, **HAEMON** STANDS NEAR THE DOORS. **OEDIPUS** AND HIS GUARDS APPROACH. **HAEMON** STOPS THEM.

HAEMON: We must wait for the Queen.

HAEMON STUDIES OEDIPUS, THEN ADDS ALMOST INAUDIBLY.

Prince Oedipus.

OEDIPUS SILENTLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE TITLE.

EVERYONE IN THE HALL STANDS SILENT, WAITING. CHEERING IS HEARD IN THE DISTANCE.

*

TEIRESIAS, WITH HIS GUIDE, HAVING MOUNTED THE STEPS, ENTERS THROUGH THE FRONT DOORS OF THE PALACE. FROM THE PEOPLE IN THE COURTYARD THERE IS SCATTERED CHEERING. POLYPHONTES STEPS FORWARD AND, DISMISSING THE BOY, TAKES TEIRESIAS' ARM. TEIRESIAS TOUCHES HIS HAND.

TEIRESIAS: Whose hands are these that tremble?

POLYPHONTES: Polyphontes.

TEIRESIAS: Polyphontes.

You know words that could stop this marriage.

POLYPHONTES: I will not speak.

TEIRESIAS: Your silence will destroy this house.

POLYPHONTES: My Queen has asked for my silence.

TEIRESIAS: Queen Jocasta?

POLYPHONTES: Yes. The Queen.

*

FROM A CORRIDOR, JOCASTA -- IN FULL REGALIA, WEARING THE EMERALD

CROWN -- WITH HER GUARDS APPROACHES. TEIRESIAS, POLYPHONTES, AND JOCASTA MEET AT THE FOOT OF THE INTERIOR STAIRWAY. JOCASTA AND TEIRESIAS ASCEND THE STEPS TOGETHER. SHE HELPS HIM.

JOCASTA: Welcome, Teiresias.

TEIRESIAS: My child, my child. The Gods are against this union.

JOCASTA: On the contrary, the Gods have ordained it. Zeus, himself, has meddled with my life.

TEIRESIAS: Hubris, Madame, madness! -- you do not see where you go.

JOCASTA: My eyes are open. They see more than yours. I follow my fate of my own free will.

TEIRESIAS: And Oedipus?

JOCASTA: I will protect the one I love. I will protect the one I love -- from the misguided morality men have developed to possess the world.

TEIRESIAS: The Gods...

JOCASTA: IN A FIERCE WHISPER, THAT ONLY TEIRESIAS CAN HEAR.

What do you want me to do? Kill him? Kill him, again? For what? -- the patriarchal nonsense of taboos?

TEIRESIAS: The Gods...

JOCASTA: You conciliate the Gods. I will not thank them for my happiness. I will not blame them for my sorrow.

TEIRESIAS: For a score of years you will know happiness...

JOCASTA: So much?

TEIRESIAS: And then from the heights...

JOCASTA: AS SHE MOVES AWAY FROM TEIRESIAS, HER WORDS OVERRIDE HIS.

I had not hoped for so much.

SHE SIGNALS TO POLYPHONTES TO HELP TEIRESIAS, AND WATCHES UNTIL HE AND POLYPHONTES ENTER THE THRONE ROOM. THEN SHE WALKS AHEAD TO JOIN OEDIPUS. AS THEY STAND FACING EACH OTHER, SHE SMILES.

Does one dare emulate the Gods?

OEDIPUS RETURNS HER SMILE, KISSES HER HAND.

*

A FLOURISH FROM THE TRUMPETS. LED BY JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS, THE PROCESSION ENTERS THE THRONE ROOM. ALL THOSE GATHERED IN THE ROOM, THE NOBLES, COURTiers, GUARDS, SOLDIERS, KNEEL. JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS APPROACH THE THRONE ON ITS DAIS.

JOCASTA: May I call you by your title?

OEDIPUS NODS. WHEN THEY REACH THE THRONE, JOCASTA TURNS TO FACE THE ROOM; **OEDIPUS** KNEELS BEFORE HER. **KUPIA**, WITH THE IMPERIAL CROWN, KNEELS TO ONE SIDE.

Noble people of Thebes, my citizens. Today we rejoice. The Sphinx is dead. Our great great hero, Oedipus, is with us. Today a new history of peace, prosperity, of gentle love between the Royal House of Thebes and its people begins. You know Oedipus as the Hero of Thebes, but I shall call him by his high, rightful title: Prince of Corinth.

THE PEOPLE, ASTONISHED, PLEASED, MURMURING LOOK TO EACH OTHER. THE STRICKEN SHEPHERD STARTS FORWARD.

Our exalted hero is a Prince of mighty Corinth. He has come, all

unknowing, to save our city. I, Queen of Thebes, choose him for my consort. His youth, his strength, his courage will help to rebuild our land.

SHEPHERD: FRIGHTENED BY HIS OWN AUDACITY, THE SHEPHERD STANDS UP AND FORCES HIMSELF TO SPEAK.

Your Majesty...

JOCASTA: This man will confirm my words.

SHEPHERD: Your Majesty...

JOCASTA: Yes, kind Shepherd. By your *oath*: Does King Polybus rule Corinth?

SHEPHERD: Yes, your Majesty.

JOCASTA: Does he have but one son?

SHEPHERD: Only one, your Majesty.

JOCASTA: This is he, Prince of Corinth, called Oedipus.

SHEPHERD: DESPERATELY.

Because of the wounds he bears in his ankles.

JOCASTA: Thank you, gentle Shepherd.

SHE TURNS FROM HIM TO OEDIPUS. THE SHEPHERD, DAZED, SLOWLY LOWERS HIS HEAD AND KNEELS.

I have chosen this man to be my husband. By custom, the Queen of Thebes can marry only the King of Thebes. You kneel to me as Prince of Corinth, but by our solemn decree and royal will, you shall rise -- King of Thebes.

SHE TAKES THE CROWN FROM THE PILLOW KUPIA IS HOLDING.

You have worn the laurels. Now, you wear the diadem of Thebes.

SHE PLACES THE CROWN ON HIS HEAD, AND GIVES HIM HER HAND.

Rise, King Oedipus, equal in sovereignty.

A NOBLE PROCLAIMS:

Long Live Queen Jocasta! / Long Live King Oedipus! / Joy
and happiness to the Majesty of Thebes!

MANY VOICES REPLY:

Long Live Queen Jocasta! / Long Live King Oedipus!

JOCASTA: Rise, my people.

THE PEOPLE RISE. JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS SEAT THEMSELVES ON THE DOUBLE THRONE. JOCASTA LOOKS STRAIGHT AHEAD TO WHERE CREON, PROUD AND STILL IN A PLAIN WHITE TUNIC, STANDS IN THE OPEN DOORWAY FLANKED BY THE QUEEN'S GUARDS IN GOLDEN UNIFORMS. THE PEOPLE TURN TO LOOK AT CREON. THE ROOM IS SILENT. THEN, SO SOFTLY IT IS ALMOST UNNOTICED, A CHANT BEGINS. KUPIA IS HUMMING THE PEOPLE ARE SOMEWHAT PUZZLED, AGITATED, UNNERVED AS KUPIA'S SINGING GROWS LOUDER. RECOGNIZING THE SOLEMN, MINOR CHANT FOR THE DEAD, OTHERS JOIN HER. WHEN THE CHANT HAS DIED DOWN. THERE IS A LONG SILENCE.

JOCASTA: Come forward. My brother.

CREON STEPS FORWARD. STOPS. JOCASTA BECKONS HIM AGAIN.

Closer. We are siblings after all. I will not harm you.

OEDIPUS: SHARPLY

Prince Creon...

JOCASTA RAISES HER HAND QUICKLY, TO STOP OEDIPUS.

JOCASTA: As ruler of Thebes, I hold absolute power of life and death over *all* Thebans -- many of whom, great Creon, you have treated as enemies. You play at life and death as if it were a game, as if human lives were shadows in your mind. You have just killed a kind, generous, honorable man, a loyal friend of yours.

CREON: Who are you talking about?

JOCASTA: Lord Acmon is dead.

CREON: Indeed? I didn't kill him.

JOCASTA: You put him in prison on a frivolous charge. What did you expect him to do? There's a certain lack of consciousness in this land, much of which flows from you. The epitome of Theban life, has been to send its men to war, to kill and be killed -- to murder, rape, pillage. You, your cohorts, hirelings, Sown Men, have warred and slain until our ground is soaked scarlet with Theban blood.

But now, I change that. I declare there shall be no more wars. Not in my realm. Not in my lifetime. King Oedipus and I will rule in peace. That is my desire, my decree, my dream for Thebes.

CREON: Would that you could, sweet Jocasta, order up reality so easily. "No more wars" -- and, like magic, there are no more wars...

OEDIPUS: **QUIETLY, TO JOCASTA.**

Banish him.

JOCASTA AGAIN HOLDS UP HER HAND, NOT UNKINDLY, BUT DEFINITIVELY. OEDIPUS, RESTLESS, IRRITATED, TEMPORARILY HOLDS HIS PEACE. AFTER A LONG PAUSE, HE LEANS OVER TO AGAIN SPEAK QUIETLY WITH JOCASTA.

OEDIPUS: Exile. Send him to Argos...

JOCASTA: No. Oh no. Creon's great love is to spend nights in tents and days in

killing. He'd be back within a month with warriors to lay waste to Thebes. One more war, win or lose, and Thebes will be in ruins: my land, your land, his land -- the land of all our people.

TO CREON:

You have been, as you well know, the most powerful man in Thebes, almost its God. But today I deprive you of all rank, title, privilege, and voice in the governing of Thebes. No longer *Prince Creon*, you are the least of our citizens. Thebes' Queen, would have you in prison. While there, she must find something to tether your warrior's energy, temper your warrior's blood, something to tame you.

Less than four generations ago our ancestor Cadmus brought the new art of writing to Thebes, the Phoenician alphabet, giving us the ability to record events, make the recounting of human experience almost palpable, almost permanent .

CREON: Used only for trickery.

OEDIPUS: Come, I am impatient to be married to the woman I love...

HE GLANCES AT JOCASTA, THEN AROUND THE ROOM. SOME OF THE NOBLES SMILE, BUT THE ATMOSPHERE REMAINS TENSE.

I charge you with treason, with the intention of bringing Thebes to ruin, so you might force its rightful Queen from her throne.

CREON: I have never desired to seize the throne. I want only to *do* what kings do: Enhance our realm, bring prosperity, win glory.

OEDIPUS: You will swear an oath of allegiance to Queen Jocasta and to me.

CREON: INSTEAD OF ANSWERING OEDIPUS, HE SPEAKS TO JOCASTA.

I have no cause, my sister. to think you and our young hero are capable of ruling Thebes -- my country, my land, the land I love. No, I do not approve your rule conjoined with this insolent riddle solver. I choose

prison.

JOCASTA: Ah! Good! better than I had hoped! You *will* be imprisoned in the North Wing where you misused your youth, or, let us say, one-sidedly grew into -- not a statesman or a philosopher -- but a killer of soldiers and citizens.

While being locked up -- for as long as you choose -- you will learn to read and write. You will write for us a history of Thebes -- not its wars -- but a definitive text about its government, and how it might be improved. But no wars. Half of which have been savage slaughter, and the other half, glorification of murder, thievery. You may name or count them, but not detail their events, nor eulogize their heroes.

In addition to a history, you shall write a definitive text on how to manage Thebes' resources -- ways, without bloodshed, to bring glory back to Thebes.

I am going to work you hard. You shall teach Oedipus from your vast store of knowledge everything there is to know about Thebes: its laws, its customs, its resources: crops, cattle, mines, water -- and commit it all to writing. I want you to share your knowledge, so that my children's generation will be literate, knowledgeable about their world. Oedipus, being from Corinth, may need little instruction in trade. Perhaps you may learn from him.

CREON: Your idea is poppycock, your outlook is that of a child.

OEDIPUS STEPS TOWARD CREON. JOCASTA RESTRAINS HIM BY TOUCHING HIS ARM.

JOCASTA: Perhaps. But now that we can pass knowledge directly, generation to generation, how long will take to learn enough to change from killing to kindness? One generation? Two? A hundred years? A thousand years? Two thousand? I want the distillation of your brilliance recorded -- the rest erased. I want your wisdom, not your crimes to be remembered. You have a chance to speak down centuries. I want you to speak of peace so that our world may one day live in peace.

CREON: SMILING, ALMOST LAUGHING, GENIALLY.

I beg your pardon, my sister, Queen Jocasta, I am not a scribe, I am not a writer. I have no interest in reading or writing.

THE NOBLES ARE APPRECIATIVE OF THE LIGHT HEARTED, BUT SERIOUS NATURE OF THIS BANTER -- AS IS OEDIPUS.

JOCASTA: I know. That's what makes it such a splendid idea -- to put you back in the North Wing -- prison -- with guards to see that you, at last, *become interested* in reading and writing. I want our Cadmian heritage recovered, I want us to be known as a great and literate society. Greater than Athens. Oedipus, has been raised a literate prince. Even Kupia is scribe enough to teach you to write. Fine teachers will come to fill your head with lessons until you *can* write a history of Thebes. Your release will depend on it.

By then we hope your taste for bloodshed will have died! Indeed, having become a civilized man, you may walk out of the North Wing one day to share our peace and prosperity.

CREON: To put things on tablets, papyrus? Ha! My sister do not attempt to play the trickster with me.

JOCASTA: The trick is I mean it. When you have completed your task, when you are a good writer, and I have my fine texts, then we will find use for you in our government.

CREON: You have chosen the wrong man.

JOCASTA: Teiresias predicts tragedy for you, but I think only if you bring it on yourself. He also predicts that you will one day rule Thebes.

OEDIPUS TURNS TOWARD CREON. JOCASTA AGAIN TOUCHES OEDIPUS. BUT NOW OEDIPUS DOES NOT RESPOND TO HER TOUCH. HE SPEAKS TO CREON IN A CALM, IRONIC TONE.

OEDIPUS: If you do not vow allegiance, you will not be imprisoned! You will be executed. Now! -- or at any time hereafter that you break your oath --

instantly and cruelly.

JOCASTA NOT EXACTLY PLEASED, BUT WILLING TO PLEASE OEDIPUS.

Which shall it be, Creon, son of Menoeceus? Death... or the crown's
scribe?

CREON: Your cleverness is admirable, you scramble thoughts with great skill.

JOCASTA: I have been well taught

OEDIPUS: TO CREON: We respect your ability.

CREON: I think you are a dangerous man to work for.

TURNING TO JOCASTA

And you...

OEDIPUS: We leave the choice to you.

CREON: My sister...

**OEDIPUS' HAND MOVES TO HIS SWORD. AFTER A LONG PAUSE,
CREON KNEELS. AMONG THE NOBLES, ETC. THERE IS A
RELAXATION OF TENSION. SOME ARE SURPRISED. OEDIPUS
RISES TO STAND BESIDE JOCASTA.**

OEDIPUS: You no longer have a sister. You have a Queen.

CREON: BOWS HIS HEAD

I swear my allegiance to you, my sister, Queen Jocasta...

and to you, Oedipus... King of Thebes...

**LOOKING UP CREON STUDIES OEDIPUS INTENTLY. THEIR
RESEMBLANCE TO EACH OTHER IS UNMISTAKABLE. IT OCCURS**

TO CREON THAT OEDIPUS MIGHT BE HIS OWN SON.

By my life, I swear. By my life, honoring my heritage, I will not break my oath.

JOCASTA: Rise then, Creon, even in prison you shall serve as tutor to our new King. What you know, he must know. Thebes shall prosper in peace.

GUARDS, WEARING IMPERIAL GOLD UNIFORMS, STEP FORWARD TO SURROUND CREON

You may attend our wedding, but will stand behind all others. Later, your assignment completed, you will become again Prince and our brother.

CREON IS AS AMUSED AT THIS AS IS JOCASTA. HE IS INSULTED AND DEMOTED, BUT HE CAN SEE IT IS ALSO THE TURNING POINT TO A NEW LIFE. SHE SIGNALS FOR HIM TO STAND BEHIND THE CROWD. CREON AND HIS GUARDS WILL BE THE LAST TO LEAVE THE THRONE ROOM.

JOCASTA: TURNS TO OEDIPUS, SMILING.

Come. -- My love cries haste. I want thee for a husband.

ALL: NOBLES, SOLDIERS, GUARDS, ETC. KNEEL AS JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS, IN A GREAT SWEEP OF PAGEANTRY, LEAVE THE THRONE ROOM.

THE NOBLES, COURTiers, ETC., TALKING AMONG THEMSELVES, FILE OUT TO FORM A PROCESSION BEHIND THE KING AND QUEEN. TO ONE SIDE, THE SHEPHERD DETAINS TEIRESIAS. THE THRONE ROOM IS ALMOST EMPTY.

SHEPHERD: IN A FRIGHTENED WHISPER:

Teiresias, the Prince of Corinth is...

TEIRESIAS: Silence, foolish Shepherd.

SHEPHERD: The Gods will punish her.

TEIRESIAS: With death, even as you and I.

*

JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS IN THE DARK FRONT HALL, WITH THE PROCESSION BEHIND THEM, ADVANCE TO THE OPEN FRONT DOORS.

*

THE COURTYARD IS FILLED WITH PEOPLE, NOISY AND REJOICING. A GREAT SHOUT GOES UP FROM THE CROWD AS JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS EMERGE FROM THE PALACE. THEY CROSS THE THRESHOLD FROM DARKNESS INTO THE SUNLIGHT. ONE PILLAR PARTIALLY SHADOWS OEDIPUS.

*

THE JOYOUS FESTIVAL GOES ON AND ON IN THE COURTYARD. ALL THE RESOURCES OF THEBES HAVE BEEN BROUGHT INTO PLAY TO MAKE THIS A GRAND AND MEMORABLE OCCASION. FROM THE SUNLIGHT ON JOCASTA AND OEDIPUS' RADIANT BUT UNSMILING FACES, WE MOVE TO FOCUS DIRECTLY ON THE SUN. THE SCREEN IS FLOODED WITH GOLDEN LIGHT.

EPILOGUE

Two generations later -- after the war known as The Seven Against Thebes, in which the twin sons of Jocasta and Oedipus killed each other -- during the Epigoní war, Thebes was utterly destroyed. Its great gates were reduced to rubble, its palace obliterated, and the line of Cadmus, Polydorus, Labdacus, Laius, Creon, Jocasta, Oedipus, Polyneices, Eteocles, Antigone was extinguished. Nothing was ever written about the twenty years of peace and prosperity which Thebes had known under Queen Jocasta and her son.

Ismene, the virgin scribe.

Thebes was the most renowned warrior culture in ancient Greece. After the twenty years of Jocasta's peaceful reign and after Oedipus had blinded himself, their twin sons, then grandsons turned Thebes into a slaughter house, leaving their realm in total ruin -- from which it never recovered. Twenty years of peace, twenty years of destruction, and then silence -- forever.

Jan Haag
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FROM THE JOCASTA POEMS

#15 -- BLINDNESS

After twenty years of peace and
prosperity, happiness,
procreation, Oedipus found

out what Jocasta already knew,
and put out his eyes. Thus
began western civilization.

FROM THE JOCASTA POEMS #15

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FROM THE JOCASTA POEMS

#16 -- DEATH

"Today Oedipus blinded himself, and is preparing
to wander off as a pilgrim. He likes to suffer;
drama was lacking in his life. He'd become a house-husband
and father, a little plump around the middle.

He wasn't about to let the drought be caused by nature.
Teiresias predicted twenty happy years.

The children are grown. I'm weary of humans'
needs, men's drama. Life is so simple, so beautiful.

But Oedipus, as so many men, is addicted to anguish,
addicted to creating problems out of the nature of things.

So be it. I have had more than I ever dreamed.
Surely some day a time will come when man will agree to happiness.

After he learns to save the autumn leaves, man will invent death."
So saying, being human, she hanged herself.

FROM THE JOCASTA POEMS #16

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